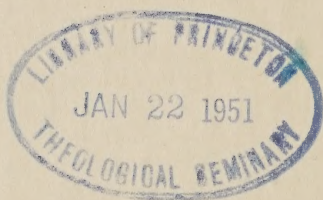
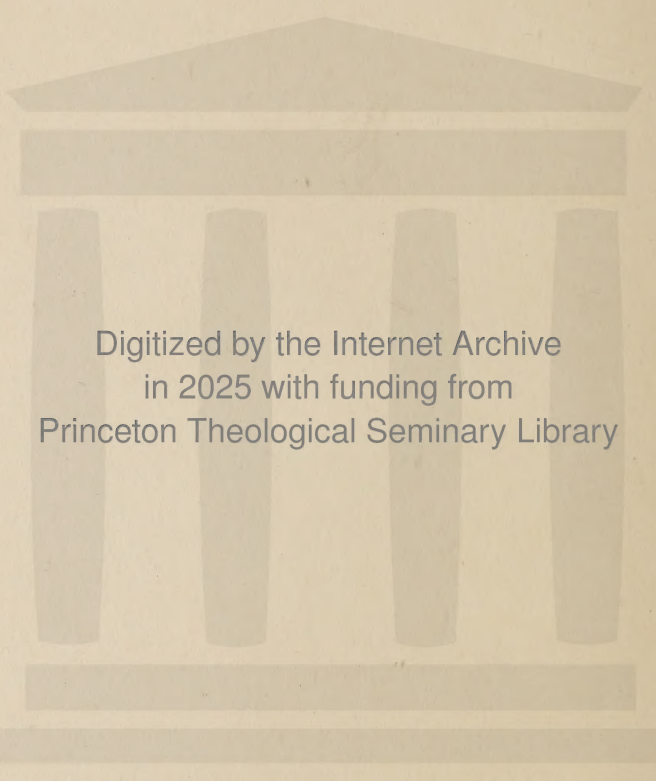


From Statesman to Philosopher

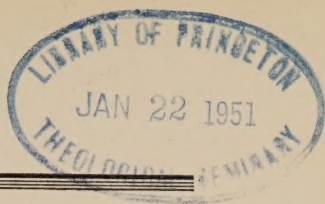


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From Statesman to Philosopher



From Statesman To Philosopher

A Study in
Bolingbroke's Deism

by
WALTER MCINTOSH MERRILL



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To
George Sherburn

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Introduction

HENRY ST. JOHN, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751), is chiefly known as a politician and a man of action. During the days of Queen Anne his power was in the ascendant. From 1704 to 1708 he was Secretary at War. When the Whigs came to power in 1708, he resigned and retired to the country for two years, announcing, so it is alleged, that he was through with affairs of the world, that henceforth he would lead the life of a scholar and a philosopher.¹ Though there is no evidence that he immediately took up this manner of life, he may have begun his reading in philosophy at this time. When Harley became Lord Treasurer in 1770, however, Bolingbroke was not reluctant to accept the post of Secretary of State. This position he held during the negotiations for the Peace of Utrecht and until the death of Anne on August 1, 1714. A few days before her death, he had succeeded in edging Harley, then the Earl of Oxford, out of power; but the death of the queen put an end to all his hopes. Rumors of Whig vengeance led to his hurried flight to France in the following March, and early in August he was banished and attainted.

Some time before the act of attainder was passed—probably in July—Bolingbroke joined the Pretender as his Secretary of State. This position occupied his time until March, 1716, when he was summarily dismissed.²

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Typical of his attitude towards philosophy during this period is the following letter to Mme. de Ferriol:

Je ne suis pas, Madame, si avide de gloire que vous pensez; et bien loin de me sentir l'audace d'aspirer au caractère de philosophe, je connais les bornes que la nature m'a prescrite, et m'y renferme. Le sage serait dans une solitude, tel que la mienne par son choix. . . Pour moi, je vous avoue, que je suis assez fou, pour être ici à contre coeur. La nécessité dans laquelle je me suis trouvé, de me bannir de Londres, m'a paru un commencement de malheur; et celle de quitter Paris, en a été assurément le comble.³

Bolingbroke is still thinking in terms of political power and a restoration of his position in England; philosophy is by no means his chief interest. After he had been dismissed by James, however, and political prominence was at best a distant prospect, he began to think of philosophy more seriously.

Bolingbroke's interest in philosophy was stimulated primarily by two men—M. de Pouilly and the Abbé Alari, both scholars of note.⁴ He writes of Pouilly:

You led me first, in my retreat, to abstract philosophical reasonings: and, though it be late to begin them at forty years of age, when the mind has not been accustomed to them earlier, yet I have learned enough under so good a guide, not to be afraid of engaging in them . . .⁵

This passage would suggest 1718, when Bolingbroke was forty years of age, as the date in which he began what he considered serious philosophical reflection. He must, however, have begun his philosophical studies

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somewhat earlier; for in a letter to Alari, dated August 12, 1717, he writes:

Je vous diray donc que je travaille Heraclidion quoddam, qui devient plus longue que je n'avais pensé. En échauffant la mémoire comme l'imagination on en tire plus qu'on ne pense, dans les magasins de l'une et de l'autre il y a des faits et des idées qui se présentent d'abord. On les croit simples et sans suite, mais dès qu'on veut s'en saisir pour les mettre en oeuvre; on trouve des queues d'une longueur surprenante dans lesquelles mille autres sont entortillées . . . J'ay formé les projets de deux autres petits traités à peu pres dans le même goût, et je crois que ces trois contiendront la plus grande partie de ce que j'auray à dire sur les sujets dont nous avons souvent parlé ensemble.⁶

Bolingbroke goes on to tell of his readings in Roman history and gives Alari advice about some project in which he is engaged. I do not know the subjects of the three treatises referred to by Bolingbroke. Whatever they are he says that Alari and he had often discussed them. What would they be so likely to discuss as philosophy? Perhaps, therefore, Bolingbroke had at least discussed philosophy before August of 1717. The discussions with Alari may, though I think it unlikely, have begun as early as 1715, when Sichel thinks the two men met.⁷

The following February Bolingbroke writes to Alari, acknowledging the arrival of some books—without naming the titles—which he had asked Alari to get for him. In the same letter he asks for more books—Pliny, Polybius, and Diodorus Siciulus—and says that he is keeping up his Latin by reading occasionally for a

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quarter of an hour.⁸ Later in this month in a letter to Mme. de Ferriol he mentions Malebranche whose *Recherche de la vérité* may have been among the books sent him by Alari:

La situation de mes affaires est assez mauvaise; mais je la regarderais comme désespérée, si je n'avais que le système du père Malebranche pour fondement de mes espérances.⁹

In the previous month his letter to the same lady mentions Hobbes' *De cive*.¹⁰

In March, 1719, his studies had proceeded far enough so that he could write Swift:

I have found less resource in other people and more in myself, than I expected . . .
I live, my friend, in a narrower circle than ever, but I think in a larger.¹¹

To the learned Alari, in a letter dated the first of the following July, he expresses determination to continue his philosophical studies. He says that he has only begun the noble

recherche sincère de la vérité . . .¹²
et ni la considération du temps que j'ai perdu, ni celle d'une santé qui est forte usée, ne sont capables de me décourager.¹³

The letter closes with an extended discussion of ancient history and chronology, the topic foremost in Bolingbroke's mind at this time. Six days later another letter¹⁴ to the young scholar shows that Bolingbroke had been reading Charron whom he quotes—giving an exact citation—considering him superior to Montaigne.

A year later Bolingbroke purchased a small estate near Orléans which he called La Source. Here he studied harder than before—perhaps as much as six or seven hours a day; for in a letter to Mme. de Ferriol

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of January 22, 1721, he speaks of offering a guest six or seven hours a day for study. In the following May he confesses in a letter to Alari, "Je deviens de jour à autre plus amoureux de la retraite, et des mes livres."¹⁵

During this period Bolingbroke conversed from time to time with Brook Taylor, the brilliant English scientist and mathematician. Sichel thinks Taylor is in part responsible for "Letters to M. Pouilly."¹⁶

Voltaire visited at La Source¹⁷ in the winter of 1722. He was very much attracted to the eminent Englishman, complimented lavishly his learning, his French, his politeness, his vast reading. In part this praise may have been the result of Bolingbroke's more than favorable opinion of Voltaire's epic, *La Ligue*,¹⁸ which was soon to be published. Bolingbroke pronounced this poem better than anything which had appeared in French poetry.

Whether Voltaire primarily influenced Bolingbroke or vice versa is a moot question. Collins thinks Bolingbroke's influence on Voltaire was tremendous.¹⁹ It is true that Voltaire was the younger man and at a more impressionable age. It is also true that by this time Bolingbroke had been reading philosophy for four or five years and that he had already written "Letters to M. Pouilly," a treatise on the limits of human knowledge,²⁰ probably the "Letter occasioned by one of Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons," and part of the *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles*.²¹ That Voltaire had not at this time proceeded far in his study of philosophy also seems clear. It is likewise true that Voltaire frequently praised Bolingbroke and in part admitted his debt to him. Bolingbroke's *Works*, moreover, were published in 1754, two years before Voltaire's period of philosophical writing began.²² If we add to

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this evidence the fact that there is too much resemblance between the philosophical writing of the two men for the similarities to be accidental, then it seems likely that Voltaire owed a considerable debt to Bolingbroke.²³

By the spring following Voltaire's visit Bolingbroke becomes more confident and ambitious in his philosophical speculations. He writes in a letter to Alari, dated April 12, 1722, "Le peu que je sais, je veux le savoir par système."²⁴ In the same letter he tells how Abbé Aselin, who has access to many great libraries, borrows books for him; and he begins to contradict biblical chronologists and historians. Later, in April, he tells Alari that he has marked off the limits of certain knowledge, that he has distinguished the different classes of the probable, and that he has pointed out the immense realm of error. Moreover, he says, "J'ai réduit tout cela en système . . ."²⁵ Two years later he was to disclaim all pretenses to system.²⁶

Although he was reading, conversing, and writing with more and more apparent eagerness, Bolingbroke was longing for England and political life. When he went to Paris in the spring of 1722, he did everything in his power to secure a pardon from the Hanoverian King of England. Finally, in May, 1723, he succeeded, though the attainder remained in force and he was unable to enjoy his estates or his title. He was able, however, to go to England the following month to plead his case. All his pleading and scheming was in vain; the attainder was not removed. He set out for Paris via Aix-la-Chapelle in September. In Paris he worked assiduously for the British ministry, hoping the minister would use his influence to help him. This procedure was no more effective than his contrivances in London. In the spring Lady Bolingbroke²⁷ went to

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England, partly to transact urgent business of her own, partly to plead her husband's cause. Later Alari, too, went to beg Walpole to reverse the attainder. The two of them with the aid of a bribe of eleven thousand pounds to the Duchess of Kendal obtained a promise that a bill of reversal would be introduced in Parliament the next session.

During his stay in Paris Bolingbroke's intellectual life was probably confined to his discussions at the Société d'Entresol, a literary and philosophical club founded by Alari in 1723 and frequented by many of the most brilliant men of the time—both French and foreign. How much this companionship meant to him is indicated in a letter to Alari written in July after he had gone back to La Source:

Chargez-vous de mes très humbles compliments a toute notre petite académie (Société de l'Entresol). Si je ne comptais pas de les revoir dans le mai prochain, je serais inconsolable. Ils ont confirmé mon goût pour la philosophie; ils ont fait revivre celui que j'avais autrefois pour les belles lettres: que je leur suis obligé! . . . A propos de philosophie . . . je viens de lire le livre de M. Huet, qu'on a imprimé en Hollande.²⁸ En vérité, c'est un des plus grands exemples de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain qu'on puisse donner.²⁹

Bolingbroke remained at La Source hunting, conversing, and reading until the spring of 1725. During the summer of 1724 he writes of La Source as a philosophic retreat,³⁰ saying of his discussions with Pouilly:

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La physique nous occupe un peu; mais c'est la physique qui est fondée sur des observations et sur des expériences, et qui est cultivée par la géométrie. La métaphysique même, mon cher abbé, prend une partie de notre temps; mais c'est la métaphysique qui est fondée sur des idées claires et déterminées. Quand on ne passe ces bornes, tout ce qu'on acquiert est véritablement connaissances . . .³¹

When spring came and the bill of reversal had still not been introduced to Parliament, Bolingbroke's impatience drove him to London again. On the 28th of April a petition was presented to the House of Commons, but the ministry, headed by Walpole, was reluctant to do more for Bolingbroke than was absolutely necessary. At last, however, the provisions of the attainder restraining the use of his title and estates were removed. Bolingbroke was free to live in England, to make use of all his property and his title; since, however, the attainder had been reversed only in part, he could never again become a member of Parliament nor hold any office in the state.

Bolingbroke, greatly disappointed that his restoration was only partial, retired immediately to the country, bought an estate which he called Dawley Farm, and lived in luxury far above his means. He was now living a few miles distant from Pope, who was to become one of his closest friends.

Pope and Bolingbroke had met years before, probably during the last days of Queen Anne, but Bolingbroke was then a busy politician and Pope a young, little-known poet. There is no evidence that their friendship is to be dated from that period. When Bolingbroke came back to England in 1723, hoping for a complete

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reversal of the act of attainder, he again saw Pope, who was by this time recognized as a great man of letters. The two met now on equal terms; Bolingbroke was happy to be considered the friend of the greatest English poet of the time, and Pope idolized the distinguished but unfortunate statesman. Indeed, he writes in a letter to Swift:

Lord Bolingbroke is the most improved mind
since you saw him, that ever was improved
without shifting into a new body . . .³²

Previously Pope had admired Bolingbroke as a brilliant politician and man of the world; now he considered him a philosopher as well. During Bolingbroke's residence at Dawley (1725-1735) the two men undoubtedly engaged in countless philosophical discussions, Pope always looking to Bolingbroke as his tutor and guide.

In the spring of 1726 Voltaire came to England. The intimacy between Bolingbroke and Voltaire, begun at La Source in 1722, was continued in London and at Dawley. Indeed, Voltaire gives Bolingbroke's address as his own.³³ It is not known how much of his two and one-half years' sojourn in England was spent with Bolingbroke, for Bolingbroke's position as an opponent of the government made it important that Voltaire not seem too much his friend. But he was certainly thrown much with the circle of Bolingbroke and Pope, and surely the philosophical discussions begun at La Source must have continued.

Bolingbroke's life at Dawley during this time was not all philosophical contemplation. He was also organizing an opposition to Walpole. In December, 1726, was founded the opposition periodical, *The Craftsman*, in which Bolingbroke launched many attacks against the

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government. His hopes for political power reached a high point in the spring of 1727, but when on the 11th of June the king died suddenly, hopes again were frustrated. Bolingbroke took refuge in farming, reading, and caring for his wife at Dawley, though he continued to write pamphlets in opposition to the government. This way of life he continued until 1735.

The problem of Bolingbroke's relationship to Pope's *Essay on Man* is beyond the scope of this book. Let me say, however, that in general Bolingbroke did stimulate and influence Pope's philosophical thinking, and that he did urge Pope to write a philosophical poem. Pope began the *Essay* at least as early as 1729, during which year Bolingbroke was living at near-by Dawley. Pope and Bolingbroke undoubtedly had many times discussed problems of philosophy together, just as Bolingbroke had earlier discussed philosophy at La Source with Alari, Pouilly, Brook Taylor, the English mathematician,³⁴ and Voltaire.

Lord Bathurst in a letter³⁵ to the Rev. Joshua Parry, dated April 3, 1769, says he has seen a series of propositions written by Bolingbroke for Pope to versify. Bathurst also says that the manuscript has never been published. By the date of this letter all of Bolingbroke's writings which we know, except his letters and his oration,³⁶ had been published. Therefore, if such a work did exist, it cannot be among his published works; and it is not known to exist in manuscript. Clearly, proof that any of Bolingbroke's printed works influenced Pope's *Essay* is impossible.

In 1735 Bolingbroke, financially distressed and politically discouraged, went back to France. He settled at Chanteloup and began negotiations to sell Dawley Farm. Again he studied and wrote, this time chiefly

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about history. MacKnight says he read six hours a day,³⁷ and that "he wrote without books and with the aid of a few notes only."³⁸

This self-imposed exile was put to an end by a trip to England in 1738. The sudden death of Queen Caroline in December, 1737, had reminded Bolingbroke that George II was getting old, that Frederick, Prince of Wales, might soon be on the throne, and that he might be able to win the Prince's favor. But Bolingbroke's political hopes again were denied. He was glad, however, to be able to sell Dawley Farm and to discuss philosophy with Pope at Twickenham.

By May, 1739, Bolingbroke was back in France, settled in the country at Argeville, leading the reflective life once more. Chesterfield, who visited him for three days in 1741, writes:

He is plunged in metaphysics, and willingly neither speaks, nor speaks of anything else. He says, indeed, it is only to expose metaphysics; but at least in order to expose them he goes so deep into them that they absorb him.³⁹

In April, 1742, Bolingbroke's father died, but, except for a short trip to England, he continued to live in France. Two years later, the year of Pope's death, he moved back to England, where he lived in the family mansion at Battersea. Though Walpole had been driven from office, and Bolingbroke came into greater favor with the government, he continued to live a retired life at Battersea, enjoying the reputation of being a distinguished political writer and being remembered as a once powerful statesman, until his death the 12th of December, 1751. The *Gentleman's Magazine* published the following as a part of his obituary:

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When his passions subsided by years and disappointments, and when he improved his rational faculties by more grave studies and reflexion, he shone out in his retirement with a lustre peculiar to himself, tho' not seen by vulgar eyes. The gay statesman was changed into a philosopher, equal to any of the sages of antiquity. The wisdom of Socrates, the dignity and ease of Pliny, and the wit of Horace appeared in all his writings and conversation.⁴⁰

In his will Bolingbroke left all his property in his writings, published and unpublished, and all the books in his library to David Mallet, the Scottish Poet and biographer.⁴¹ Bolingbroke's writings, which were expected to be published soon, were awaited with great anticipation; they were, MacKnight says, the talk of all social and literary circles. Lord Cornbury, then Lord Hyde, and Lord Marchmont, however, who feared for Bolingbroke's reputation if his anti-religious tracts were published, did their best to persuade Mallet to cut out the most objectionable passages. But Mallet was impervious to their pleadings, and the *Works* were published unexpurgated, March 6, 1754.⁴²

As soon as the *Works* were published both Bolingbroke and his writings were attacked as highly reprehensible. Johnson said to Boswell:

Sir, he was a scoundrel and a coward: a scoundrel, for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death!⁴³

John Leland devoted more than three hundred pages

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to his dangerous philosophy in *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers* (London, 1754). William Warburton, Bolingbroke's avowed enemy, wrote an entire volume of invective, *A View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy in four Letters to a Friend* (London 1754-5). Even the clergyman at Battersea, Thomas Church, who owed his living to Bolingbroke, was not slow to join the chase with his *Analysis of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy*.⁴⁴ Henry Fielding, who had only a few months to live, wrote a rather unimpressive attack, "Fragment of a Comment on Lord Bolingbroke's Essays."⁴⁵ Edmund Burke, the following year, was moved to publish his first work, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, in which he aped Bolingbroke's style and attempted a *reductio ad absurdum* of his doctrine of natural religion. Edward Young, the same year, paid his disrespects repeatedly to Bolingbroke in his *Centaur not Fabulous*:

What more enormous than to let Infidelity gather such strength, even in our decline, as to stand the terrors of a death-bed, and bequeath proud legacies of its poison to the world? Is not this stretching out our boldness even beyond the day of trial? carrying the war into the very borders (if I may so speak) of that *dread Being* we dare oppose? and desperately presuming to atchieve that in our grave, of which a *Julian*, of equal genius, tho' not of equal guilt, despaired on a throne; and that the greatest on earth.⁴⁶

Bolingbroke's life, we have seen, was a series of frustrations: Queen Anne died precisely as he had become the most powerful figure in English political life; and, forthwith, he was attainted and exiled to France. The Pretender dismissed him as his Secretary of State, sud-

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denly and for no known reason. His negotiations for the restoration of his rights continually failed. Finally, the attainder was reversed, but only in part. Then George I died at the moment when Bolingbroke had reason to expect his favor. Even the attention paid to Prince Frederick was of no great service to him. Each frustration was followed by a period of retirement. During these periods of retirement, besides seeking restitution of his political power, he read extensively, talked with Alari, Pouilly, Voltaire, Pope, and others, and formulated theories about the ways of God and man.

These theories are of two sorts—political and philosophical. The political theories, for the most part, are reflection of Bolingbroke's momentary political position. After he and Harley had been turned out of the Whig ministry in 1708, his views were those of a Tory. While he was in power from 1710 to 1714 he demonstrated that fact by opposing the Whigs with violent persistence, seeking to establish himself in power at any cost. From 1715 to 1716, when he was the Pretender's Secretary of State, his opinions must be considered Jacobitical. From 1726 to 1735 he wrote as an opponent of both Whigs and Jacobites: against the former he denounced ministerial corruption; against the latter he denounced the doctrine of the divine right of kings. He formed an ill-assorted coalition of Tories and dissenting Whigs for the purpose of overthrowing Walpole, and became a notable theorist of coalitionism. In his *Remarks on the History of England*—a series of twenty-four letters contributed to *The Craftsman* in the year 1730-31—he attacked indirectly not only Walpole but also King George II and Queen Caroline. In his *Dissertation upon Parties*—a series of nineteen letters published in *The Craftsman* in 1733-34—he praised

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the Revolution Settlement and the coalition of Whigs and Tories which brought it about in 1688. The final stage in the development of his political theories was merely an extension of the ideas he expressed during the middle period (1726-35). From 1735 to 1751 *patriotism* was the key word in his political writings, as the titles of his two important tracts show—*The Spirit of Patriotism* and *The Idea of a Patriot King*. In these essays Bolingbroke set forth the duty of the good king to govern not for the benefit of his friends or of his Minister's friends, but for the good of all his people. A patriot minister, such as Bolingbroke was quite eager to become, would govern, not for a party or faction, but for the good of all the people. These ideas, which in part were simply designed to get Walpole out of office, had appeal in a day when both universality and benevolence were words expressing the noblest ideas.⁴⁷

It is this last stage in Bolingbroke's political development which is important in its influence on posterity. The political ideas expressed by Bolingbroke during this period greatly influenced George II and his friends in the late eighteenth century and Disraeli and the Young England Group in the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Hearnshaw believes that Bolingbroke "is rightly regarded as the founder of the modern Tory democracy."⁴⁸

Bolingbroke's philosophical theories, I have said, were formulated during his periods of retirement. During the first of those periods he apparently wrote nothing. During the period following his attainder, however, he wrote in French a number of tracts which can be considered philosophical—"Reflections upon Exile," "Substance of Letters to M. de Pouilly," *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles*, "The Short Treat-

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ise on Compassion," and "A Letter occasioned by one of Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons." During the Dawley period Bolingbroke wrote his most important philosophical works—four "Letters or essays addressed to Alexander Pope, Esq.," and "Fragments or Minutes of Essays."

All of these philosophical essays, except "The Short Treatise on Compassion" which has disappeared and *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles* which, as I have said, was published in 1752, are available in Mallet's edition.⁴⁹

Bolingbroke makes no attempt to present his philosophy systematically. He explains in the "Advertisement" to "Fragments or Minutes of Essays":

The foregoing Essays (those addressed to Pope), if they deserve even that name, and the Fragments or Minutes that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's lifetime, and at his desire. They were all communicated to him in scraps, as they were occasionally writ . . . The "Fragments" are all nothing more than repetitions of conversations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confusedly.⁵⁰

Not only was Bolingbroke's method of presenting his philosophical theories unsystematic but also those theories, he was certain, could not, and should not, be formulated into a system. In a letter to Pope, dated February 18, 1724, he writes:

First then, I would assure you, that I profess no system of philosophy whatever, for I know none which has not been pushed beyond the bounds of nature and of truth.⁵¹

Bolingbroke's philosophical theories can, however, be

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formulated into a system, for they can be described collectively as deism. Bolingbroke's deism, like that of his contemporaries, is readily analyzable into two aspects—one positive, the other negative.⁵² The positive aspect consists of his theories of Providence, miracles, evil, immortality, and finally, natural religion and ethics. The negative aspect consists of a criticism of metaphysics and theology and of revelation. To some extent both of these aspects of deism, and to a great extent the positive one, are based on a conception of God as a being infinitely powerful and wise and external to the world.⁵³

¹ Thomas Macknight, *The Life of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke* (London, 1863), p. 126. Macknight, unfortunately, does not annotate this statement.

² Sir Charles Petrie (*Bolingbroke*, London, 1937, pp. 279ff.) thinks that James dismissed Bolingbroke because of his indiscretion in being intimate with the mistress of L'Abbé Dubois, a Hanoverian sympathizer.

³ Bolingbroke, *Lettres historiques, politiques, philosophiques et particulières*, M. le General Grimoard, ed. (Paris, 1808), I, 429. This letter is reprinted in Walter Sichel, *Bolingbroke . . .* (London, 1902), II, 477-8.

⁴ Pouilly produced an encyclopedia in 1717. His *Theory of Agreeable Sensations* appeared in English (London, 1749). Sichel, II, 80, wrongly dated it 1747. Alari, though he never published anything had a reputation for great learning.

⁵ Bolingbroke, *The Works* (London, 1754, quarto), III, 183.

⁶ This unpublished letter, which is in the possession of Professor Sherburn, is, so far as I know, the first dated letter to Alari. There is an undated letter which Grimoard thinks was written in 1716 or 1717 which may be earlier.

⁷ Sichel, II, *op. cit.*, 74-5. Sichel's reasoning here is not very convincing.

⁸ Bolingbroke, *Lettres . . .*, II, 458.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 458.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 449.

¹¹ In Jonathan Swift, *The Correspondence of . . .*, F. Eldrington Ball, ed. (London, 1912), III, 25.

¹² This phrase may be an echo of Malebranche's *Recherche de la vérité*.

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- 13 Bolingbroke, *Lettres* . . . , III, 22.
- 14 *Ibid.*, III, 62.
- 15 *Ibid.*, III, 85.
- 16 Sichel, *op. cit.*, II, 166.
- 17 There is some confusion about the date. Macknight and John Churton Collins both say the winter of 1721; but this is impossible, even assuming it to be January, 1721, or 1722 in France, because in a letter written to Thieriot about a month after October, 1722, Voltaire speaks of plans to visit Bolingbroke, and in a letter to the same person, dated January 2, 1723 (1722 O.S.), he has already visited Bolingbroke. Sichel and Hurn both give the correct date, though the former misprints 1721 in the index.
- 18 After 1728 this poem was called the *Henriade*.
- 19 John Churton Collins, *Bolingbroke, a Historical Study, and Voltaire in England* (New York, 1886), pp. 115-6.
- 20 This treatise is mentioned in a letter to Alari (Bolingbroke *Lettres* . . . , III, 161). Collins (p. 115) suggests this treatise may be substantially the same as the first essay addressed to Pope.
- 21 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 115, with Sichel, II, 456, and Arthur-Sidney Hurn, *Voltaire et Bolingbroke* (Paris, 1915), p. 23.
- 22 Hurn, p. 114.
- 23 Collins, Sichel, and Hurn all believe Voltaire to be much in Bolingbroke's debt. Hurn gives careful attention to the problem and, I think, proves conclusively that Voltaire was greatly influenced by Bolingbroke. Stephen, too, (*English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1876, I, 279) speaks of Voltaire as Bolingbroke's pupil. Norman L. Torrey, the most recent writer I have read on this subject, asserts in his Harvard dissertation, "The English Critical Deists and Their Influence on Voltaire" (1926) that Voltaire's chief debt to Bolingbroke is the use of his name. (See also Torrey, *Voltaire and the English Deists*, New Haven, 1930, pp. 135ff.) He says Voltaire was able to get away with more violent criticism of the established religion by using Bolingbroke's name than would otherwise have been possible.
- 24 Bolingbroke, *Lettres* . . . , III, 161.
- 25 *Ibid.*, III, 163-4.
- 26 Cf. with quotation on p. 16 of this book.
- 27 In May of 1720 Bolingbroke had married the Marquise de Villette, niece of Mme. de Maintenon and apparently one of the most charming ladies about the French court at this time. See Marie R. Hopkinson, *Married to Mercury* (London, 1936) for the most complete account of Bolingbroke's two wives.
- 28 Grimoard says that this book is either *Démonstration évangélique* or *De la situation du Paradis Terrestre*. I think it more likely to be *Traité de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain* (Amsterdam, 1723), and that Bolingbroke is playing on the words of the title.

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- 29 Bolingbroke, *Lettres* . . . , III, 193.
 30 *Ibid.*, III, 235.
 31 *Ibid.*, III, 239. Bolingbroke here shows a more tolerant attitude toward metaphysics than he does later.
 32 Alexander Pope, *Works*, Elwin and Courthope, ed., VII, (1871), 58.
 33 James Parton (*Life of Voltaire*, Boston, 1881, I, 197) says: "The house of Lord Bolingbroke . . . was usually the place of his abode in London, and [the place] to which his letters from France were addressed." Hurn says (p. 23): "C'est là [la résidence de Bolingbroke], que Voltaire avait en quelque sort son 'home' pendant son séjour en Angleterre"; and he refers to several letters in proof of this assertion. Torrey (*op. cit.*, p. 137) says that Voltaire "makes it plain, however, that this address was purely in the interest of security and expedition, and never intimates that he is established at Bolingbroke's house."
 34 See Sichel, *op. cit.*, II, 166.
 35 This letter was published completely in Charles Henry Parry's *A Memoir of the Revd. Joshua Parry* (London, 1827). I can not give an exact citation to this work because I have not had access to it. See George Sherburn, "Bolingbroke's 'Fragments' and the *Essay on Man*," *P. Q.*, XII (1933), 402, for a short discussion of this problem.
 36 Bolingbroke's orations have never been published.
 37 Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 623. Macknight gives no indication of the source of his information.
 38 *Ibid.*, p. 626.
 39 Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, *The Letters* of . . . (London, 1932), II, 474.
 40 *Gentleman's Magazine* (London, 1751), XXI, 572. This passage is part of a long quotation from the Earl of Orrey's memoirs of Dean Swift. The next year the *Gentleman's Magazine* printed (XXII, 36) the following anonymous poem:

On the Death of L - d B - ke.

Illustrious B - 's no more,
 Ye muses bring your mournful store,
 In doleful numbers sing.
 Where ev'ry grace and art combin'd,
 What language equal can you find,
 To wake the sounding spring?
 What science first her voice shall raise,
 When each demand a right to praise
 The graceful and profound?
 His was the vast capacious soul,
 Not part suffic'd him, but the whole
 He grasp'd, the circle round.
 By eloquence a scroll's held forth,
 In which she celebrates his worth,

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And Truth inserts a line,
Higher no human wit shall rise,
The limit's fix'd by Fate, she cries,
'Twixt mortal and divine.
Nor, Wisdom, of thy son be vain,
Since this his memory shall stain:
A genius, so refin'd,
With evil men his counsel shar'd;
With them the manacles prepar'd,
His native land to bind.

- ⁴¹ Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 688.
- ⁴² Before this date some individual essays had been published. Macknight suggests (p. 697) that "almost immediately after Bolingbroke's death, a volume containing his *Reflections on Exile* and the letters on History was published in Paris from a copy in the possession of the Marquis of Matignon." In London in 1752 *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles* was published, with French on one page and English on the opposite one. (Macknight thinks [pp. 697-8] that this essay was written for the Société d'Entresol). In 1753 Mallet published in one volume the "Letter to Sir William Windham," the unfinished "Reflections on the State of the Nation," and the first "Letter to Pope."
- ⁴³ James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* (Oxford, 1933), I, 178. In his "Introduction" to the "Letters or Essays Addressed to Alexander Pope" (III, 330) Bolingbroke explains his reason for not publishing his *Works* himself: "Prudence forbids me, therefore, to write as I think to the world, whilst friendship forbids me to write otherwise to you. I have been a martyr of faction in politics, and I have no vocation to be so in philosophy."
- ⁴⁴ Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 702. See also John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England* (London, 1873), III, 197.
- ⁴⁵ This essay was published in the same volume as *A Journal of the Voyage to Lisbon* (London, 1755).
- ⁴⁶ Edward Young, *The Works of the Author of Night-Thoughts* (London, 1802), III, 208. I know of only two other contemporary attacks on Bolingbroke's philosophy. One of them by James Hervey, an Oxford Methodist, was directed against *Letters on the Study and Use of History*; the other by Charles Bulkeley, was entitled *Notes on the Philosophical Works of Lord Bolingbroke*. (See Hunt, *op. cit.*, III., 197).
- Violent opposition to Bolingbroke continued into the nineteenth century, for Scott in a note to a letter of Bolingbroke's which he cites in his edition of Swift (Edinburgh, 1814, XVI, 478) calls Bolingbroke's arrangement to have his works published posthumously "an act of wickedness more purely diabolical than any hitherto upon record in any age or nation."
- ⁴⁷ See F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke," in *The Social and Political Ideas of Some English*

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Thinkers of the Augustan Age (London, 1928) for a good brief discussion of Bolingbroke's political views. Walter Sichel, *op. cit.*, II., 448-55, gives some insight into Bolingbroke's influence on Disraeli and later Toryism. Charles B. Realey, *The Early Whig Opposition to Sir Robert Walpole* (Lawrence, Kan., 1931) gives an excellent account of the stage-setting for Bolingbroke's later political career. Keith G. Feiling's *Second Tory Party (1714-1832)* (London, 1938) is a standard work on the period.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁴⁹ Unless I specify otherwise my references will be to the 1754, quarto edition of Bolingbroke's *Works*.

⁵⁰ Bolingbroke, V, 2; see also V, 437.

⁵¹ In Pope, *op. cit.*, VII, 396.

⁵² I prefer the terms positive and negative to constructive and critical, because the latter terms are generally used to describe historical periods of deism rather than two aspects of any particular deism (see Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1902, I, 91ff. and Ernest C. Mossner, *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason*, New York, 1936, pp. 46ff.). I am indebted to John Orr's *English Deism* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1934), pp. 14-15 for these terms.

⁵³ Most of the commentators on deism fail to realize the importance of this conception of God to deism in general. G. C. Joyce, for example, in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York, 1912), IV, 533-43, distinguishes historical from philosophical deism; only the latter is, he thinks, essentially concerned with a conception of God.

CHAPTER I

The Existence and Attributes of God

ANTHONY COLLINS says that no one doubted the existence of God until Clarke endeavored to prove it.¹ Collins' remark applies to the deists. The early deists merely accepted God's existence as self-evident; the later deists—some of them, at least—had to reassure themselves by proving His existence. Herbert of Cherbury, generally considered the first deist, was confident of God's existence, because he thought the idea of God innate, one of the universally accepted common notions of religion. He writes:

No general agreement exists concerning the Gods, but there is universal recognition of God. Every religion in the past has acknowledged, every religion in the future will acknowledge, some sovereign deity among the Gods.²

Charles Blount apparently accepts Herbert's view.³ Toland, however, though he does not actually prove God's existence and though he does at times appear to accept Herbert's theory of common notions,⁴ emphasizes the importance of reason in discovering the certainty of God's existence. Collins in passages like the following suggests the Argument from Design:

No one denies the Existence of a God but some idle unthinking, shallow Fellow. And

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Mr. Hobbes says, *That they who are capable of inspecting the Vessels of Generation, and Nutrition, and not think them made for their several Ends, by an understanding Being, ought to be esteem'd destitute of Understanding themselves.*⁵

Tindal more completely develops the teleological argument, though he reasserts the certainty of God's existence typical of the early deists. "I cannot be more certain of my own Existence, than of the Existence of such a Being [God]," he says.⁶ Thomas Morgan, one of the most conservative of the later deists, also uses the Argument from Design.⁷ Thus, the deists as a group either assert God's existence as an absolute certainty, or use the teleological argument to demonstrate it.

Bolingbroke copes with the problem of God's existence in a typically deistic manner. Following Herbert and the early deists, he says, "We know that God exists, with a certainty little inferior to that which we have of our own existence."⁸ But Bolingbroke need not have gone to the deists to find this idea, for both Locke and Clarke make similar statements. The latter, for example, writes:

*There is no Man whatsoever, who make any use of his Reason, but may easily become more certain of the Being of a Supreme Independent Cause, than he can be of anything else besides his own Existence.*⁹

Bolingbroke also uses the typical deistic Argument from Design, anticipating Paley's famous analogy:

Carry a clock to the wild inhabitants of the cape of Good Hope. They will soon be convinced that intelligence made it, and none but the most stupid will imagine that this

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intelligence is in the hand that they see move,

and in the wheels that they see turn.¹⁰

I believe Bolingbroke found this analogy in the same place that Paley may have discovered it, in Bernard Nieuwentyt's *The Religious Philosopher: or the Right Use of Contemplating the Works of the Creator*;¹¹ for there is evidence that he had read that work.¹² Indeed, in his general use of the teleological argument he is probably indebted more to the "physico-theologists" than to the deists, though he asserts that the efforts of Ray, Derham, and Nieuwentyt are superfluous, that we don't need them "to convince us of the self-existence of an intelligent Being, the first cause of all things."¹³ Perhaps the fact that he considers their writings superfluous explains why he does not feel called upon to state the Argument from Design more explicitly. It is as though he assumed a knowledge of the writings of Ray, Derham, and Nieuwentyt on the part of the reader.

Bolingbroke's discussion of the existence of God does not end here. Although he prefers to establish God's existence by the Argument from Design, perhaps because it is the proof (as Kant has demonstrated)¹⁴ that most nearly is dependent upon an *a posteriori* use of reason, he also refers to the two other important proofs. He rejects the ontological argument, specifically referring to Descartes;¹⁵ and he uses the cosmological argument—in one instance, exactly in the manner of Clarke—to establish the existence of an intelligent Being:

Since there must have been something from eternity, because there is something now, the Being must be an intelligent Being, because

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there is intelligence now, (for no man will venture to assert that non-entity can produce entity, or non-intelligence intelligence) and such a Being must exist necessarily, whether things have been always as they are, or whether they have been made in time; because it is no more possible to conceive an infinite than a finite progression of effects without cause. Thus the existence of a God is demonstrated, and cavil against demonstration is impertinent. It is so impertinent, that he who refuses to submit to this demonstration, among others of the same kind, has but one short step more to make in order to arrive at the highest pitch of absurdity: for surely there is but one remove between a denial of the existence of God, and a denial of our own existence; because, if we have an intuitive knowledge of the latter, we have the same intuitive knowledge of all those ideas that connect the latter with the former in demonstrating *a posteriori*.¹⁶

The passage in Clarke to which I refer¹⁷ is too long to quote, but it proceeds in the same way to establish God's existence by the cosmological argument and then to compare the certainty of His existence with our own.

Thus, Bolingbroke treats the problem of God's existence in a manner typical of the early deists when he affirms the intuitive certainty of His existence. He follows the later deists and the "physico-theologists" when he uses the teleological argument. But, unlike most of the deists, he is cognizant of the other proofs of God, explicitly rejecting the transcendental, *a priori*, ontological proof and making use of the more nearly *a poste-*

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riori, cosmological proof to demonstrate the existence of an intelligent God.

If the deists, as a group, show little interest in the arguments for God's existence, most of them ignore the problems connected with His attributes.¹⁸ Bolingbroke, however, was too much excited about what he considered the gross errors of Clarke to ignore the topic which had occupied most of *A Demonstration of Being and Attributes of God*, and part of *The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*.¹⁹

In the first of these treatises Clarke demonstrates, elaborately and much too systematically for Bolingbroke to approve, the existence of God and His essential attributes. He shows that God is eternal, infinite, omnipresent, wise and powerful—which qualities he considers God's natural attributes. Moreover, he demonstrates God's moral attributes by explaining that there are, antecedently to any will or positive appointment, certain fit and suitable circumstances to certain persons and other unfit and unsuitable circumstances to them. Anyone who can accurately perceive the relations between persons and circumstances is moral. Since God is infinitely wise, He must perfectly perceive the relations in the moral world and, therefore, possess all the moral perfections—infinite goodness, justice, and truth.²⁰ Clarke is certain that

Justice, Goodness, and all the other Moral Attributes of God, are as *Essential* to the Divine Nature, as the Natural Attributes of Eternity, Infinity, and the like.²¹

Bolingbroke agrees with Clarke that the natural attributes,²² which he limits to infinite power and wisdom,²³ can be demonstrated. He would, however, following

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the "physico-theologists," demonstrate them *a posteriori* from the works of God, not *a priori*:

When we contemplate the works of God . . . they give us very clear and determined ideas of wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because they pass, in the exercise of them, all the bounds of our conceptions.²⁴

Bolingbroke's meaning is the same as Derham's in the following typical passage: "The works of the creation are all of them so many demonstrations of the infinite wisdom and power of God."²⁵ Bolingbroke also follows the "physico-theologists" in emphasizing the importance of science's contribution to the demonstration of God's wisdom and power:

Infinite wisdom appears everywhere. Every new discovery and how many and how marvellous have these been! is a new proof of this wisdom, as well as of the power of God. The power of executing is seen in every instance, and tho we cannot discern the wisdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our observation in every instance, yet we see them in so many that it becomes the highest absurdity not to acknowledge them in all.²⁶

Bolingbroke, however, does not make it so clear how God's attributes are demonstrated in His works as Ray, Derham, and Nieuwentyt do, but I think his meaning is the same as theirs. Bolingbroke thinks that God and His attributes are manifest in every work of nature. The "physico-theologists" contemplate and experiment with a vast number of the works of nature, showing how the hand of God is to be seen in them. Nieuwentyt, for example, describes a simple experiment with the

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flame of a candle, a lens, and a piece of paper. He suggests holding the lens at such a distance from the candle's flame that the image of the flame will be reflected on the sheet of paper. That image will be seen to be upside down. How can such a phenomenon be explained, he asks, except as the work of God? Men who contemplate this and other optical experiments, he says,

shall never open their Eyes without meeting and receiving irrefragable Proof of a Wonder-working Deity, which so directs and regulates the unconceivable multitude of all the Rays of Light flowing from all Parts . . . that they can serve for a distinct Sight to all Creatures.²⁷

Nieuwentyt's conclusion is the same as Bolingbroke's. No one except an infinitely powerful and wise Being could have created so many wonderful works.

Although Bolingbroke agrees with Clarke that the natural attributes can be demonstrated, he does not agree with him that the moral attributes can; for they are derived not from God's works but "from reflections on ourselves and from our dealings with one another."²⁸ Surely we are not justified in ascribing to God the moral virtues which we know only from our association with men? When we consider the infinite distance between man's and God's nature, we realize how inadequate our ideas of God's moral nature must be and how impertinent it is for us to say we know God's moral attributes:

Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, safely from error, and in direct opposition to Clarke, that goodness and justice in God cannot be conceived without manifest presump-

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tion and impiety, to be "the same as in the ideas we frame of these perfections, when we reason about them abstractly in themselves; but that in the supreme Governor of the world they are something transcendent, and of which we cannot make any true judgment; nor argue with any certainty about them."²⁹

Bolingbroke goes on to cite as authority for his position two men whose orthodoxy is unquestioned, Dr. Barrow and St. Paul.³⁰ He refers to a sermon of the former on the text from St. Paul's epistle to the Romans (xi, 33): "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Dr. Barrow's testimony, however, is not entirely pertinent, because he is not directly concerned with the divine attributes. Moreover, Barrow's general notion of the transcendence of God could be used as an argument against the natural as well as the moral attributes.

Bolingbroke, in another context, calls for the testimony of Hobbes, regarded at that time as the most infamous of heterodox philosophers:

He [Hobbes] adds, "in like manner when we attribute sight, and other sensations, or knowledge, and intelligence to God, which are in us nothing more, than a certain tumult of the mind, excited by the pressure of external objects on our organs, we must not imagine that any thing like this happens to God." I am far from subscribing to many notions which Hobbes has advanced. But still the plain and obvious meaning of this passage, according to my apprehension, is not to deny that the supreme Being is an intelligent

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Being, but to distinguish between the Divine and human manner of knowing.³¹

Though Bolingbroke hesitates to agree with anything Hobbes says,³² he must have thought his position clearly established when both the orthodox and the heterodox agree with him.

The perfection of God, Bolingbroke's argument continues, would be limited by the moral attributes in a way in which it is not limited by the natural attributes; or the moral attributes are bounded, whereas the natural attributes are unbounded, or infinite. The moral attributes, Bolingbroke writes, "must cease to be what they are, unless we conceive them bounded. Their nature implies necessarily a limitation in the exercise of them." Nowhere is this theory made more explicit; it is difficult to know exactly what Bolingbroke means by it. John Leland and William Warburton, Bolingbroke's most ambitious critics, agree that both the natural and the moral attributes are limited, bounded, when they are considered in their application from God to man, but that they are infinite, unbounded relative to God.³³ Warburton, who considers the matter more thoroughly than does Leland, says his lordship is wrong even if you accept his premises; for how is it that one can have a more adequate idea of the unbounded than the bounded. The reverse is true, he is certain:

His first inference seems to be this, As the *moral* attributes are bounded, and not infinite like the *natural*, our idea of them must be cloudy, obscure, inadequate. What! because they are better adapted to human contemplation? As things *bounded* certainly are, than things infinite.³⁴

Warburton certainly misrepresents Bolingbroke's posi-

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tion; the latter does not say that our idea of the moral attributes is cloudy, obscure, inadequate, because the moral attributes are bounded. He merely asserts that the very nature of the moral attributes implies a limitation in the one exercising them. Such a limitation is well and good for man, but not for God; for God is unlimited, unbounded, infinite.

Bolingbroke's argument is, I believe, based on his abhorrence for the absolutist moral theory postulated by Cudworth and Clarke, which I shall discuss in some detail in a later chapter.³⁵ The philosophers, Bolingbroke thinks, limit God, make Him in effect finite, by making Him subject to the laws and rules of the moral universe, the positive system of moral fitnesses and unfitnesses. They believe that God cannot act contrary to the dictates of His moral attributes. Such a view of the moral attributes requires "infinitely more of God to man, than men are able, or would be obliged, if they were able, to exercise to one another."³⁶ In short, the divines are blasphemously concerned not with the duty of man to God but with the duty of God to man. They presume to tell what God ought to do, what He is forced by His attributes to do.

Moreover, while they are conceiving God as in the image of man, what's to prevent their ascribing to Him man's imperfections as well as his perfections? What is to prevent, at any rate, their ascribing to Him such peculiarly human virtues as fortitude and temperance, virtues which can have no meaning when applied to God who can neither feel pain nor be subject to man-like appetites?³⁷ Bolingbroke thinks that Clarke sees this danger of applying all of man's moral qualities to God and that he is to be commended for finally limiting the divine moral attributes to goodness and justice.³⁸

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Some system makers, Bolingbroke says, have gone even farther than to attribute imperfections and human virtues to God. They have been so unwilling to deny the moral attributes that they have had to postulate a principle of evil to account for the evil in the world. Such ditheism is dangerous, because it leads inevitably to polytheism:

When they saw that the constitution of things, and the order of providence did not answer the notions of goodness and justice in all the extent, in which they thought it was fit to ascribe these notions to a Supreme Being, contrary notions stood ready to take the place of these; and, since they could not ascribe them all to one, they ascribed them to several divinities. From hence a good and evil god, the ditheism of philosophers. From hence that universal polytheism, a principal use of which was to account for the phaenomena of nature, and for the government of the moral world.³⁹

Not only does Bolingbroke disapprove of Clarke's *a priori* reasoning about the divine attributes but he also disapproves, though less vehemently, of King's analogical reasoning about them:

The false conceptions, and the licentious reasonings about the divine nature and providence . . . may proceed likewise from the analogical doctrine, as contrary as it appears to the other; for by ascribing to God not human notions and passions, but something, whatever it be, equivalent to these, King might, tho he does not, reason as dogmatically as Clarke, *a priori*, from what the creator and governor of the world ought to do in

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those qualities, to what he has done . . .⁴⁰

King is perfectly frank in admitting that just as the blind man lacks faculties to comprehend light, so man lacks faculties to comprehend God. Therefore, we must be satisfied to know what we can of God and his nature indirectly, by analogy. We cannot know directly that He is powerful, wise, good, and just, but we can know that he is something like what we call powerful, wise, good, and just:

If we would speak the truth, those powers, properties, and operations, the names of which we transfer to God, are but faint shadows and resemblances, or rather indeed emblems and parabolical figures of the divine attributes, which they are designed to signify; whereas his attributes are the originals, the true real things of a nature so infinitely superior and different from any thing we discern in his creatures, or that can be conceived by finite understandings, that we cannot with reason pretend to make any other deductions from the natures of one to that of the others than those he has allowed us to make; or extend the parallel any further than that very instance which the resemblance was designed to teach us.⁴¹

King is certain, however, that such analogical knowledge is sufficient for the purposes of religion. We are satisfied with incomplete knowledge in other realms; why should not we be in religion?

Anticipating an objection to his theory, King is careful to distinguish analogy from figure of speech. Figures, he says, are used to heighten or adorn the ideas we have of well-known things. They are used "to move

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our passions, or engage our fancies more effectually than the true and naked view of them is apt to do, or perhaps ought."⁴² Consequently, figures are often used for deceptive purposes. Divine analogies, on the other hand, are used to provide us with some conception of things concerning which we have no direct knowledge. By means of analogy, he says, we are able to perceive the nature and some of the properties of God as well as to be taught how we should behave towards God and what we must do to to acquire a more complete knowledge of His attributes.

Bolingbroke categorically denies this distinction between analogy and figure. It seems to him "that analogy is figure, or it is nothing; and that, if it is figure, it is of the kind of those which are employed to deceive us."⁴³ Moreover, he says that figure is used to contribute to our conceptions of things as knowable as well as merely to adorn and illustrate things well known to us. It is used in the latter capacity by orators and poets, in the former by philosophers.⁴⁴ Figure may be used to deceive, as King suggests, but the deception is merely temporary when it is confined to things knowable or known; for we may discover the truth or falsity of the figure by our own investigation. When the figure or analogy to use King's term, is applied to things not otherwise knowable, however, the danger of deception is multiplied a hundred times; for the deception may be permanent:

If this assumed divine analogy differs from other figures, therefore, it differs in this, they cannot deceive long, this may deceive always.⁴⁵

Knowledge, in short, which is based entirely on figure or analogy is not real knowledge. Though analogy may help us to prove, the proof must ultimately be based on

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intuitive or sensitive knowledge. Analogy is an aid in our reasoning only when the thing about which we are reasoning is knowable.

If, therefore, reasoning by analogy is merely specious, King's reasoning about the divine attributes is of little value. It is impossible for him really to know any of God's attributes by such a method; "for knowledge, which rests in analogy, stops short, and is not knowledge."⁴⁶ Bolingbroke is willing to admit that we see God in an indirect, a reflected light; but he is unwilling to admit, as he thinks King is logically forced to do, that we cannot see Him at all.⁴⁷

Bolingbroke's argument against King's analogical reasoning is not limited to this general and fundamental objection. He objects also to a number of King's supposed examples of the efficacy of analogy as "the usual and general method of teaching, and instructing mankind."⁴⁸

A stranger to a country, according to King, can be taught many things about that country by means of a map, though the map is only paper and ink, having only an analogical relationship to the country. Bolingbroke agrees that the map bears no direct relationship to the country, but he says that learning about the country from the map is not like learning about the nature of God from analogical reasoning about the nature of man. The map gives the stranger no new notion, for he was familiar with mountains, lakes, and rivers before he saw the map. The map merely tells him that there are mountains, rivers, and lakes similar to the ones he is familiar with in the country described by the map. Moreover, the map was made by people who had themselves observed the country. In other words, the map is concerned with teaching things

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known by the makers of the map and knowable by the percipients of the map.⁴⁹

Another example used by King is concerned with our sensitive knowledge of the sun. We know even the sun in much the same way as we know God. We perceive the heat and light of the sun, but we do not know the true nature of either these ideas of heat and light or of the physical sun which causes them. Likewise, the Providence of God in governing the world may give us ideas of anger and revenge, though the actual moral nature of God remains unknown. Again Bolingbroke denies the parallel urged by King:

Whatever light and heat are in themselves, the simple ideas that we distinguish by these names are raised by the action of the sun immediately, and uniformly. But the complex ideas of anger and revenge are not so raised by any act, or direction of providence.⁵⁰

Although we do not know the complete nature of the sun, we do know that some physical object directly causes the ideas of light and heat. In the case of God, however, we do not know any corresponding physical cause. Furthermore, all percipients of the sun would agree that they are experiencing heat and light, whereas there is great disagreement among men concerning the attributes of God's nature that are demonstrated by various appearances of His Providence; "for the same appearances which are ascribed to God's anger or revenge by one man, and at one time, will be ascribed to his justice, or even to his mercy, by another man at the same time, or by the same man at another time."⁵¹ Reasoning about the divine moral nature from ideas of anger and revenge is as valid, Bolingbroke as-

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serts, as the blind man's reasoning about the color scarlet by its analogy to the sound of a trumpet.

Bolingbroke also attacks King's analogy between obeying an unknown prince and obeying God, for he thinks such a comparison gives occasion to "all sorts of gross and repugnant images"⁵² of God. Bolingbroke's objection in this instance is so general as to be of little value. He might have said, consistently with his previous argument, that it is unfair to compare God and a temporal ruler because the former is unknown and the latter at least knowable. Or he might have followed Collins in saying that the analogy will not hold, because the Christian is supposed to do more than merely obey God; he should also imitate His personal qualities. Surely one cannot imitate the personal qualities either of an unknown prince or an unknown God.⁵³

The only other deist, to my knowledge, who considers the problems connected with the divine attributes in any detail is Anthony Collins. In his *Vindication of the Divine Attributes*, an attack on the sermon of King's which I have referred to as *Discourse on Predestination*, he expresses systematically much the same opinion of analogical reasoning as Bolingbroke does:

According to his Grace's (King's) Notions, it is impossible for him to prove the Existence of God against Atheists. For our Conceptions or Ideas that we signify by the term God, must be the Subject of Proof whenever we bring the term *God* into a Proposition: But his Grace says *All our best Conceptions of God are infinitely short of Truth* and as *different from Truth as weighing-in a Ballance is from Thinking*, or as *Light from Motion*. Therefore his Grace cannot prove the Being of

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God, or which is all one, the Existence of any being that is really conformable to our Conceptions of God; unless his Grace will say, That *what is infinitely short of Truth*, can be prov'd true.⁵⁴

The only kind of God, according to Collins, that King's theory of the attributes will allow is a purely causal one. He can logically define God as the general cause to be inferred from the wonderful effects in nature; but such a God would not satisfy most Christians. Collins cannot but conclude that the generality of mankind would be better off if the ordinary conception of God's perfections had never been disturbed. King has merely taken away the usual conception of God's perfections and left not "any fix'd determinate Notion of one essential Attribute."⁵⁵

Bolingbroke does not, however, go so far as Collins; for he affirms the natural attributes, and he does not, in spite of what Warburton may say, entirely deny the moral attributes.⁵⁶ It is true that he objects both to Clarke's orthodox conception and to King's more liberal view. He objects to Clarke's conception because he thinks it blasphemous to assert that God's goodness and justice are the same as our ideas of them and to King's because he agrees with Collins that to say God is only analogically good and just is to deny his goodness and justice. What Bolingbroke intends to establish is a middle position between Clarke's on the one hand and King's on the other.⁵⁷ The moral attributes are neither to be affirmed with Clarke as conformable to our ideas of goodness and justice, nor are they to be known, as King suggests, only analogically. Rather they are to be considered as part of the natural attribute wisdom. Bolingbroke speaks of their being absorbed in

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or observable in the divine wisdom. For since God is infinitely wise, "he does always that which is fittest to be done. That, which is fittest to be done, is always just and good."⁵⁸

Thus, God, according to Bolingbroke, is a being infinitely powerful and wise and in some sense good and just. Since He exercised perfect power and wisdom in creating the world, the world itself must be so perfect that it does not require the continuous presence of God as governor. In such a world there can be no necessity for the frequent intercession of the Creator. God governs the world merely by a general Providence.

- ¹ Anthony Collins, "*An Answer to Mr. Clarke's Third Defence of his Letter to Mr. Dodwell*," Clarke, *Works* (London, 1738), III, p. 883.
- ² Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *De veritate*, Meyrick H. Carre, trans. (Bristol, England, 1937), p. 291.
- ³ S. G. Hefelbower, *The Relation of John Locke to English Deism* (Chicago, 1918), p. 88.
- ⁴ John Toland, *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (London, 1696), p. 31.
- ⁵ Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London, 1713), p. 104.
- ⁶ Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London, 1730), p. 12.
- ⁷ Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
- ⁸ Bolingbroke, V, 92; see also III, 355.
- ⁹ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (London, 1749), p. 19.
- ¹⁰ Bolingbroke, IV, 111; see also 70, 86; V, 66.
- ¹¹ (London, 1745), I, xlviff, 23, 346.
- ¹² See the appendix.
- ¹³ Bolingbroke, IV, 259.
- ¹⁴ See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (London, 1929), pp. 518ff.
- ¹⁵ Bolingbroke, IV, 256 and V, 8.
- ¹⁶ Bolingbroke, III, 354-5.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Clarke, *Demonstration* . . . , pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁸ William Warburton says (*A View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy*, London, 1754, p. 26) that the deists accept the being and attributes of God.

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- 19 The complete title of this sermon, the one to be found on the title page, is *A Discourse concerning the unalterable obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*. Bolingbroke always uses the shorter title.
- 20 Samuel Clarke, *Demonstration . . .*, pp. 114ff.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 22 Bolingbroke sometimes uses the term *physical* attributes, by which he means the same thing as natural attributes.
- 23 Bolingbroke is not alone in so limiting the natural attributes. See John Tillotson, *Sermons* (London, 1742), VII, 2278. Collins in his *Vindication of the Divine Attributes* (London, 1710), pp. 4-5, uses similar terminology, though he considers wisdom a moral attribute. See also Soame Jenyns, *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (London, 1757).
- 24 Bolingbroke, V, 309-10.
- 25 William Derham, *Physico-Theology: or, a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation* (London, 1798), II, 401.
- 26 Bolingbroke, V, 334.
- 27 Nieuwentyt, *op. cit.*, III, 925.
- 28 Bolingbroke, V, 525-6.
- 29 *Ibid.*, V, 369; see also V, 89. The quotation is from Clarke's *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion* (London, 1719), p. 26, where Clarke is describing Bolingbroke's particular type of deist.
- 30 *Ibid.*, V, 369ff.
- 31 *Ibid.*, III, 352. Bolingbroke quotes from *De cive*; see Hobbes, *English Works* (London, 1839), II, 215-16.
- 32 In general, Bolingbroke reflects the unfavorable attitude towards Hobbes which was so common in his day. He makes it quite clear that he does not consider himself a disciple of that infamous atheist (III, 531), that he "will not sink so low as Hobbes" (V, 13), etc.
- 33 Cf. Wm. Warburton, *A View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy* (London, 1756), pp. 191ff. and John Leland, *A View of the . . . Deistical Writers* (London, 1754-6), II, 188-9.
- 34 Warburton, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- 35 See Chapter VII.
- 36 Bolingbroke, III, 528.
- 37 *Ibid.*, V, 90, 311ff., 529.
- 38 *Ibid.*, V, 311.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 529; see also IV, 88.
- 40 *Ibid.*, V, 541; see also V, 526.
- 41 William King, *Discourse on Predestination* (Oxford, 1821), pp. 19-20.
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

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- ⁴³ Bolingbroke, V, 534.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 535; see also V, 520.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 536.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 526.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 524; also see V, 539.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 536.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 537.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 538.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, V, 538.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, V, 540.
- ⁵³ Anthony Collins, *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes, in Some Remarks on his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin's Sermon, entitled, Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge . . .* (London, 1710).
- ⁵⁴ Anthony Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- ⁵⁶ He even says (V, 312) that "he is far from denying them, as he is from denying the wisdom and power of God."
- ⁵⁷ Bolingbroke, V, 526.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 313.

CHAPTER II

Providence

THE DEISTS as a group show little interest in the doctrine of Providence. Indeed, if we are to believe S. G. Hefelbower, they merely accept the orthodox interpretation along with Locke and Clarke:

Locke and all the leading Deists accepted the doctrine of Providence in the traditional sense, though it was rejected by some unnamed writers, whom we know through the criticisms that were directed against them, and who were called Deists.¹

Herbert, Toland, and Collins ignore the problem of God's relationship to the world, whereas Charles Blount, Tindal, Wollaston, and Morgan accept the orthodox position. Blount speaks of man as under the guidance of God.² Tindal accepts the conception of Providence—in effect the orthodox one—which Clarke considers typical of the best sort of deists.³ Wollaston writes, "God cannot put things so far out of His own Power, as that He should not *for ever govern* transactions and events to His own world."⁴ He thinks it as certain that there is particular Providence as that God is perfectly rational.⁵ Morgan denies that the world is capable of continuing in existence even for one moment "without the necessary Presence, Power, and Operation of God upon it."⁶

Chubb and Annet, on the other hand—perhaps they

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are two of the unnamed writers Hefelbower refers to—deny the orthodox conception of Providence. Chubb, in general, denies particular Providence, though he admits that God may upon some extraordinary occasion intervene to change the course of His general Providence.⁷ Annet, though he does not specifically discuss Providence, denies categorically that God intervenes to change the course of nature; such action, he says would be inconsistent with His attributes.⁸

Bolingbroke is to be distinguished from most of the deists both in the thoroughness with which he considers the problem of God's Providence and in the heterodoxy of his conclusions. More than any other deist, he seems to realize the central importance of a discussion of Providence to the general deistic position. If one is to deny miracles and revelation, one must deny particular Providence, for miracles and revelation are evidence of God's particular Providence in the world:

In asserting the justice of providence [he says] I chuse rather to insist on the constant, visible, and undeniable course of a general providence which is sufficient for the purpose, than to assume a dispensation of particular providences . . . The truth is that we have not in philosophical speculation, in any history except that of the Bible, nor in our own experience, sufficient grounds to establish the doctrine of particular providences, and to reconcile it to that of a general providence, which continues, and directs the course of things in the material and intellectual systems, as these systems were originally constituted by the author of nature.⁹

The perfect wisdom of God, he thinks, has amply pro-

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vided for the welfare of all his creatures "by a few general laws."¹⁰ God wills the world to exist, and then

he wills it to continue, and it continues distinct from the workman, like any human work, and infinitely better fitted by the contrivance and disposition of it to answer all the purposes of the divine architect, without his immediate and continual interposition.¹¹

Some events occur, however, which appear to be repugnant to the general laws by which God governs the world. Such events might be considered evidence of God's particular Providence, but actually they are merely contingent events which arise from the generality of God's laws. These contingent events are to be found more often in the moral, or intellectual, world than in the physical, or material, world, because man with his free will is more likely to rebel against the general laws than is passive matter.¹²

Not only does Bolingbroke consider the laws of Providence general in themselves but also he considers them general in their application. That is, God thinks and acts in terms of groups of men rather than individuals:

It is plain by the whole course of God's providence, that he regards his human creatures collectively, not individually, how worthy soever every one of them deems himself to be a particular object of the divine care.¹³

But, says Leland, it is impossible to govern collectively without governing individually as well. How could one, for example, govern a state merely through collective bodies¹⁴ without reference to individuals? Moreover, just what is meant by collective bodies? Is a collective body a city, a state, a family, or what? Bolingbroke,

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however, does not say that God's government of man stops with collective bodies; for

tho it be apparent that the immediate regard of providence is directed to men collectively, not individually, yet the divine wisdom has provided means to punish individuals, by directing men to form societies, and to establish laws, in the execution of which civil magistrates are in some sort the vice regents of providence. To them distributive justice is committed, and when this fails to have effect, when the immorality of individuals becomes that of an whole society, then the judgments of God follow: and as men are regarded collectively, they are punished collectively in the order of a general providence. This is evidently the economy of God's government of mankind in this life.¹⁵

Thus, God rewards and punishes societies, and those societies in turn reward and punish individuals.

Bolingbroke, therefore, affirms the doctrine of general Providence, but denies that of particular Providence,¹⁶ or at least denies that it can be proved, which to Bolingbroke is about the same thing. Moreover, he makes quite clear his reason for not accepting this doctrine. He thinks such a doctrine is inconsistent with the nature of God and man. It is inconsistent with God's attributes of wisdom and power that He should need to intervene to change the course of a world which He had created, for any world created by His infinite wisdom and power would be so perfect that it would require no future corrections:¹⁷

To think worthily of God, we must think that the natural order of things has been always

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the same, and that a Being of infinite wisdom and knowledge . . . can have no reason to alter what infinite wisdom and knowledge have once done . . .¹⁸

Peter Annet uses the same argument in his "On Mr. Jackson's Letter to Deists . . .":

To change the Course of Nature, is inconsistent with the Attributes of God . . . God has settled the Laws of Nature by his Wisdom and Power, and therefore cannot alter them consistent with his Perfections . . . To suppose that God can alter the settled Laws of Nature, which himself formed, is to suppose his Will and Wisdom mutable; and that they are not the best laws of the most perfect Being; for if he is the Author of them, they must be as immutable as he is . . . If the Course of Nature is not the best, the only best, and fittest that could be; it is not the Offspring of perfect Wisdom, nor was it settled by Divine Will; and then God is not the Author of Nature, if the Laws thereof can be altered: For if the Laws of Nature are God's Laws, he cannot alter them in any degree without being in some Degree changeable.¹⁹

It is interesting to notice in this connection that many of Bolingbroke's preferences in Greek philosophy are largely determined by his predilection for an absentee God, a God who rules the world by general rather than particular Providence. For example, he prefers Anaxagoras to other ancient philosophers because Anaxagoras acknowledged

a supreme mind that disposed and ordered the whole frame of the universe, that gave

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it motion and set the great machine a going under the influence and direction of second causes, which proceed and work effects according to the original impressions that divine wisdom and power made uniformly on all matter, or differently on the different elements of it.²⁰

The theory of particular Providence, Bolingbroke thinks, is also inconsistent with the true nature of man as a being no more entitled to the special dispensations of God than any other of His creatures. Those who insist that God governs the world by particular Providence do so because they think the general laws of the world do not sufficiently provide for man's happiness.²¹ Such men, according to Bolingbroke, have an exaggerated notion of man's place in the world. They consider him the final cause of the world and happiness the final cause of man's being. Nothing could be farther from the truth:

The two assumed propositions I have mentioned so often, that man is the final cause of the world and that the communication of happiness to him is the final cause of his creation, are most certainly false, as the scheme of particular providences that force the laws of nature is no doubt, and as that may be which suppose these providences exercised in a manner agreeable to these laws. That this world is fitted in many respects to be the habitation of men, or that men are fitted for this habitation, is true. But will it follow, even from the first, that the world, therefore, was made for the sake of man any more, than it will follow that it was made for any other

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species of animals, for all whom, according to their several natures, it is equally well fitted, and for all of whom we may believe on this account very reasonably, that it was made as well as for us?²²

Only if there were no physical and no moral evil in our world, could we assume that man is the final cause of the universe—an assumption which, Bolingbroke says, no one would make in his time. And only if man were perfectly good and perfectly happy, could we assume that he is the final cause of our world.²³

Moreover, Bolingbroke considers the doctrine of particular Providence dangerous because it necessitates another doctrine which reason will not affirm²⁴—the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The reasoning of divines, he says, is somewhat as follows: God made the world as an abode for man. His Providence governs the world and all the creatures in it with special consideration for man. But if that Providence were merely general, it would be insufficient to distribute rewards and punishments in a perfectly equitable manner. God must, therefore, supplement general Providence by particular Providences. Unfortunately, however, it happens that God's intercessions are so infrequent²⁵ that the virtuous often suffer and the wicked thrive. His government, consequently, is subject to the same charge of injustice as if God governed only by general Providence. As a result, it is necessary to assume that in some future life the good will be rewarded and the bad punished.²⁶

Fundamentally, Bolingbroke's objection to the hypothesis of future rewards and punishments is the same as his objection to particular Providence. It assumes that

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man is the most important of God's creatures, the final cause of the world.

If Bolingbroke had stated his theory of the divine attributes more positively, he might have attacked the orthodox conception of Providence directly; for that conception is based on the traditional theory of the moral attributes. Bolingbroke's opponents say, in effect, that because God is infinitely good and just, He would not allow the innocent to suffer for the sins of the guilty, and that, therefore, He must reward the former and punish the latter by occasional acts or special Providence as well as by an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments in a future life. Had Bolingbroke been willing to say that the terms goodness and justice did not apply to God at all, instead of hedging by claiming that God's goodness and justice were somehow absorbed in his wisdom, He could have denied the divines' major premise, that God is just and good, and thereby undercut their entire argument for particular Providence and future rewards and punishments. But instead he preferred to meet the divines on their own ground and to show that their doctrines were inconsistent with the divine justice as well as the divine wisdom.

The doctrine of particular Providence, in Bolingbroke's opinion, implies another irrational assumption besides future rewards and punishments—predestination. It assumes that "some men were determined to goodness by the silent workings of the spirit, and others not."²⁷ If those determined to goodness were sheltered from all kinds of evil and those determined to evil were afflicted by every kind of evil merely because they were so determined, God's procedure, Bolingbroke is certain, was anything but just:

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I can conceive still less, that individual creatures, before they have done either good or evil, nay before their actual existence, can be objects of predilection or aversion, of love or hatred to God: and yet this must have been, to have made such a system of particular providences effectual in the first instance of it.²⁸

Never does Bolingbroke explain why God must have had a predilection to hate or love individual men in order to make the system of particular Providences effective in the first place. Inasmuch as man has free will (a proposition "which no one can deny,"²⁹ "for free-will seems so essential to rational beings, that I presume we cannot conceive any such to be without it"),³⁰ why can't God's intercessions even from the beginning be explained as the result of man's freely chosen acts? God punishes one man for his wrong choice and rewards another for his right choice. Moreover, Bolingbroke clearly has free will in mind in this context because one of his chief objections to particular Providence is that it would destroy free will. Under a system of particular Providence "this free will must be often not only restrained, but determined irresistibly by still whispers, secret suggestions, and sudden influences."³¹

Besides its inconsistency with the nature of God and of man and the fact that it necessitates the doctrines of future rewards and punishments and predestination, the theory of particular Providences, Bolingbroke thinks, is reprehensible because of the pragmatic consequences involved in holding it. Under such a system good men would have little merit:

Such good men would have, whilst they continued to be good, no other merit than that of

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children who are cajoled into their duty; or than that of galley-slaves who ply at the oar, because they hear and see and fear the lash of the boatswain.³²

And the wicked would be hardened in heart as Pharaoh was when God visited him with afflictions.³³ As Warburton puts it, Bolingbroke objects that the doctrine of particular Providence "would make virtue servile."³⁴

Although Warburton's attack on Bolingbroke is, in general, flippanant rather than thorough, he does have some interesting observations to make on this particular point. He says that virtue for a rational creature consists in acting according to reason. If the sanction involved in the doctrine under discussion helps man to act rationally, it cannot lessen his virtue. Indeed, he suggests, Bolingbroke's reasoning could be applied in the manner of Shaftesbury, to all religious sanctions and even to all moral sanctions—a patent absurdity.³⁵

A second pragmatic effect of the doctrine of particular Providence is that it would mitigate the general benevolence of man, for the good men who are in the constant favor of God might forget to think of other people, thinking "themselves unconcerned in the common fate."³⁶ Even worse, "Spiritual pride might infect them. They might become in their own imaginations, the little flock, or the chosen sheep."³⁷ I agree with Warburton that it is difficult to understand how this doctrine could have the effect Bolingbroke fears, for once a man became less virtuous, once he became selfish or proud, God would intervene to his detriment, either by removing the divine favor or by punishing him.

Another effect of the doctrine we have discussed is that it tends, in general, to emphasize the ceremonial

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aspects of religion which Bolingbroke considers of little importance:

To keep up a belief of particular providences serves to keep up a belief not only of the efficacy of prayer, and of the intercession of saints in heaven as well as of the church on earth, but of the several rites of external devotion . . .³⁸

Finally, the world being what it is, Bolingbroke thinks that a system of particular Providences would result in God's being calumniated by man. There are a great variety of religions, each religion having its own particular conception of the orthodox. Consequently, an interposition looked upon by one sect as just would be considered by another as unjust:

Orthodoxy is a mode. It is one thing at one time and in one place. It is something else at another time and in another place . . . You Catholics damn all those who differ from you. We Anglicans doubt much about your salvation. In what manner, now, can the justice of God be manifested by particular providences? Must the order of them change as the notions of orthodoxy change, and must they be governed by events, instead of governing them? If they will be deemed unjust by every good protestant, and God will be taxed with encouraging idolatry and superstition. If they are favorable to those of any of our communions, they will be deemed unjust by every good papist, and God will be taxed with nursing up heresy and schism . . . Nay, more. If, in these dispensations, God, who knows the hearts of men, should judge dif-

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ferently from our divines, if he should shew more regard to moral goodness, than to the reputed orthodoxy of any side, it would fare with him—I say it with reverence—as it fares with every honest man in civil contests; He would be calumniated by all sides, in the exercise of particular providences, as he is in that of a general providence.³⁹

I doubt if Bolingbroke is right in saying that men would calumniate God when His intercessions were inconsistent with their own particular orthodoxy. I think they would rather deny the evidence that God had intervened in matters contradictory to their beliefs.

Perhaps the most devastating of all the pragmatic consequences of the doctrine of particular Providence in Bolingbroke's mind is the disorder which he thinks it would introduce into the world. Human affairs are so complicated and so interrelated that a particular Providence in order to be effective in one instance must often interfere with myriad mechanical laws of nature and with many natural operations of free will. As a final result "the world would be governed by miracles till miracles lost their name,"⁴⁰ for Bolingbroke thinks that occasional interpositions, if they are real, are miracles.⁴¹ God would be constrained to govern both by general and by particular Providence, and the result would be the utmost confusion:

God would govern his human creatures by two rules that do not consist very well together, since by one of them the wants and the petitions of these creatures would be submitted to one common providence which carried on the affairs of the world, according to the first constitution and original laws of

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it: and by the other, this common providence would break, if I may say so, into a multitude of particular providences, for the supply of these wants and the grant of these petitions, every one of which is an appeal to the second rule of government against the first.⁴²

Bolingbroke suggests that "we have example, as well as reason for us, when we reject the hypothesis of particular providences,"⁴³ for the Jewish theocracy was truly a system of particular Providence. God was clearly the king of the Jews, and He did not spurn the title of king nor hesitate to exercise His kingly power. He interceded constantly, demonstrating his justice daily by rewarding and punishing in an unequivocal, signal, and miraculous way. All of these particular acts of Providence, however, had only temporary effects, and indeed the Israelites were so dissatisfied with their system of government that they deposed God and desired to be governed in the same manner as their neighbors. If God's attempt to govern one nationality by particular Providence was unsuccessful, what would it be if He were to govern the whole world thus?

Warburton says that Bolingbroke completely misunderstands God's purpose in establishing the Jewish theocracy. God did not intend to establish a permanent form of government for the Jews. Rather His intention "was to keep that People a separate nation, under their own Law and Religion, till the coming of the Messiah." This purpose certainly was accomplished.⁴⁴

William Wollaston has an ingenious theory which reconciles particular and general Providence. God has the power, he says, of foreseeing all future events, even the actions of free agents. This does not mean that the acts of men are predestinated, but only that God can

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foresee how man's free will will decide any given circumstance. Thus, it can be said that God's Providence is particular as well as general, for it extends to particular individuals and circumstances.⁴⁵ This theory, Bolingbroke denounces as composed of "very arbitrary suppositions, and such as surely give little satisfaction to the mind." Man has complete freedom of choice, Bolingbroke is certain, and he can act to exercise that freedom "in spite of time, place, and circumstance." God, it is true, can foresee future events without pre-ordaining them, but He cannot make provision for particular circumstances and determine actions of individual men without pre-ordaining.⁴⁶

Wollaston has another idea about particular Providence which pleases Bolingbroke as little as the one just mentioned. He writes:

There *possibly* may be, and most probably are beings *invisible*, and superior in nature to us, who may by *other* means be in many respects *ministers* of God's providence, and authors under Him of many events to particular men, without *altering* the laws of nature.⁴⁷

Bolingbroke disposes of this theory efficiently. He admits that there may be such invisible and superior beings; in fact, his theory of the chain of being accounts for the existence of many beings superior in intelligence to man.⁴⁸ Even granting that they do exist, however, Wollaston's hypothesis is of little value. For if one is defending the doctrine of particular Providences, one is obliged to say that these superior beings act by the immediate instigation of God. Consequently, one is left in virtually the same position from which one started: "God governs the world no longer by his general prov-

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idence alone, but mediately, if not immediately, by particular providences likewise.”⁴⁹

I have spoken of Bolingbroke’s theory of Providence as being heterodox. His denial of particular Providence is sufficiently heterodox to brand him as an atheist in the opinions of orthodox critics like Warburton and Leland. The former writes:

For tho’ the Principles [Bolingbroke’s] may be called Naturalism, yet if *Scripture* has defined an Atheist right, to be one who has no Hope, and is without God in the world, our Professor of Naturalism comes within the description. For tho’ he acknowledges the being of a God, yet as he is *without a God in the world*, that is, a Being who presides over it, as the moral Governor of it, which is the foundation on which all Religion stands, Religionists will think of no other title for him. And surely he will be properly defined. For tho’ the abstract term *Atheism* carries, as it’s principal idea, a relation to God’s being: yet, *Atheist* in the concrete, seems to have it’s chief relation to God’s Government.⁵⁰

The lengths to which Warburton goes to demonstrate that Bolingbroke is an atheist, when he admits that “the abstract term *Atheism* carries, as its principal idea, a relation to God’s being” and that Bolingbroke recognizes the being of God, is typical of the way in which the term atheism is likely to be freely used in such controversies. The righteous Warburton uses the term as a pejorative epithet to describe the heterodox or merely the one with whom he disagrees.⁵¹ Bolingbroke is fond of using the word to describe the acceptedly orthodox;

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he speaks, we have seen, of a league between atheists and divines.

Leland reaches the same conclusion as Warburton:

To acknowledge a God that brought all things into existence and yet to deny that he afterwards taketh care of the creatures he hath made, as a moral governor, or concerneth himself about their actions, and the events relating to them, is, with regard to the purposes of religion, the same thing as not to acknowledge a God at all.⁵²

If one denies that God governs the world, one is forced to deny that he created it, according to Leland. For the very reasons which motivated God to create the world—His desires to communicate His goodness and to display His wonderful perfections and attributes—must also cause Him to take care of and govern the world once it is created. The Epicureans at least were more consistent than Bolingbroke, for they denied that God created the world when they denied His Providence.⁵³

Leland's argument for Providence, as it typifies the orthodox position, is perhaps worth putting down more fully. He uses the teleological argument to prove God's Providence:

The beautiful and constant order which is still maintained in the inanimate material system, plainly sheweth that this stupendous frame of nature, consisting of such an unconceivable variety of parts, is under the constant superintendency of a most wise and powerful presiding Mind, ever present to his own work.⁵⁴

The special object of this presiding Mind's attention, moreover, is man, because he is the only one of God's

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creatures who can conceive and understand the beauty and order of the world. In general, Leland argues, we must not deny that God is able to do things which would appear impossible to us. We must not begrudge Him the power and wisdom sufficient to govern men by particular Providence without infringing upon their free will simply because we are incapable of understanding how it could be done.⁵⁵ Finally, Leland has a pragmatic argument for the doctrine. Holding the theory of particular Providence to be valid produces consequences satisfactory to human living, for it stimulates good actions, and restrains bad.⁵⁶

Bolingbroke's position differs from this orthodox one in a number of respects. First, the beauty and order of the world lead Bolingbroke to postulate an all-powerful and an all-wise God who, inasmuch as He is perfectly wise, governs the world by General Providence, or by a series of general laws which He formulated when He first created the world. Both Leland and Bolingbroke derive God's Providence from His natural attributes, power and wisdom; but the former postulates a particular Providence, whereas the latter postulates only a general Providence. Secondly, while Leland thinks that man's conception and understanding of the perfection and the order of the world entitles him to a special position in that world and especially in God's government of it, Bolingbroke asserts that man is far from perfect and that in the light of new discoveries in astronomy he would be extremely egotistical to consider himself as the central being in the world and as the favorite of God. Concerning the pragmatic value of the doctrine Bolingbroke and Leland are diametrically opposed. The former thinks that it would mitigate man's virtue and his general benevolence, that it would make

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him spiritually proud and that it might lead to his calumniating God; the latter thinks it would stimulate good actions and restrain bad.

- ¹ Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 174; see also pp. 92ff. According to A. C. Fraser, (*Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford, 1894, I, 99, 418ff; II, 382) Locke accepts the deistic theory of an absentee God. After reading the passages in Locke to which Fraser refers, I agree with Hefelbower that Locke's conception of Providence is orthodox.
- ² Charles Blount, *Religio laici, Written in a Letter to John Dryden, Esq.* (London, 1683), pp. 60ff.
- ³ Tindal *op. cit.*, pp. 320, 329, 364; cf. Clarke, *Evidence*, pp. 27ff.
- ⁴ William Wollaston, *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (London, 1726), p. 109.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- ⁶ Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher in a Dialogue between Philalethes a Christian Deist, and Theophanes a Christian Jew* (London, 1737), p. 178.
- ⁷ Thomas Chubb, "A Short Dissertation on Providence," *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted* (London, 1738), pp. 200ff.
- ⁸ Peter Annet, "Supernaturals Examined in four Dissertations or Three Treatises," *A Collection of the Tracts of a certain Free Enquirer* (London, 1739-45), pp. 127ff.
- ⁹ Bolingbroke, V, 414; see also V, 416, 472.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 417.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 111.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, V, 379, 416, 473, 485.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, V, 480.
- ¹⁴ This term is used by Bolingbroke (*ibid.*, V, 472).
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 494-5.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 414, 425, 426, 458, 459, 467. John Leland in his attack on Bolingbroke in *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers* (London, 1755), II, 207, accuses Bolingbroke of neither affirming nor denying particular Providences, quoting him as saying that he will not deny there have been such. Actually Bolingbroke, in the passage to which Leland refers, specifically denies all particular Providences except "such as might happen sometimes in the ordinary course of a general providence," or, in other words, such as are merely contingent events. Cf. Leland II, 207, and Bolingbroke, V, 419.
- ¹⁷ Bolingbroke, V, 426ff.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 433.
- ¹⁹ Annet, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-8.
- ²⁰ Bolingbroke, V, 107.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, V, 417-8.

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- 22 Bolingbroke, V, 467; see also V, 326ff., 368-9, 420ff., 464, 487. Cf. Tillotson, *op. cit.*, VI, 389; VII, 21.
- 23 *Ibid.*, V, 422-3.
- 24 *Ibid.*, V, 320ff. At times Bolingbroke says that reason will neither deny nor affirm this doctrine.
- 25 Bolingbroke even cites Clarke as evidence of this fact (V, 418).
- 26 Bolingbroke, V, 464-5; see also V, 418-9, 488. Warburton uses (*op. cit.*, pp. 107ff.) exactly this argument for future rewards and punishments.
- 27 *Ibid.*, V, 426.
- 28 *Ibid.*, V, 426; see also V, 461ff.
- 29 *Ibid.*, V, 460.
- 30 *Ibid.*, V, 474.
- 31 *Ibid.*, V, 460.
- 32 *Ibid.*, V, 428.
- 33 *Ibid.*, V, 428.
- 34 William Warburton, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 238.
- 36 Bolingbroke, V, 429.
- 37 *Ibid.*, V, 429; see also V, 418. Perhaps Bolingbroke intends here to satirize the seventeenth-century Puritans?
- 38 *Ibid.*, V, 419.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 431-2.
- 40 *Ibid.*, V, 461.
- 41 *Ibid.*, V, 458. Leland (*op. cit.*, II, p. 225) takes exception to Bolingbroke's assumption that occasional interpositions are miracles. He says they are not miracles if they be "perfectly agreeable to the general laws of nature and of providence, and be only special applications of general laws to particular occasions." Leland's objection here is based on the difference between his and Bolingbroke's definition of a miracle. To Leland a miracle is a special intercession which is contradictory to the laws of nature, or the laws established by the general Providence of God; whereas, to Bolingbroke a miracle is a special intercession whether it be contradictory to the laws of nature or not.
- 42 *Ibid.*, V, 461.
- 43 *Ibid.*, V, 430.
- 44 Warburton, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
- 45 Wollaston, *op. cit.*, pp. 95ff.
- 46 Bolingbroke, V, 462.
- 47 Wollaston, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 48 Leland (*op. cit.*, II, 236), accuses Bolingbroke of inconsistency in denying Wollaston's superior beings when he approves of the idea that the universe is a chain of being. But Bolingbroke very definitely does not deny the existence of the beings Wollaston suggests.
- 49 Bolingbroke, V, 464.
- 50 Warburton, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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- ⁵¹ Morgan (*op. cit.*, pp. 355-6) writes that scepticism "is used as a modern Term of Reproach, like Atheist, Deist, Heretick, Schismatick, and many other such important Shibboleths and Party terms . . . With these men [who use these terms with such prejudice] Scepticism, Infidelity, Atheism, and all such Terms of Infamy and Reproach, signify nothing else but being of a *different* Opinion, or not submitting one's self to their infallibility, or rather to the Infallibility of their Party, while they have no Judgment or Opinion of their own . . . The popular, passionate Outcry against Deists, Infidels, Scepticks, Free-thinkers, etc. are the sure Signs either of a very bad Cause, or a very weak Defence of a good one . . ."
- ⁵² Leland, *op. cit.*, II, 204. Cf. Clarke, *The Evidences* . . . , pp. 14ff.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 209.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 210.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 211.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 213.

CHAPTER III

Miracles

ALTHOUGH MIRACLES¹ are generally considered one of the focal points of the deistic controversy, many deists have little to say about them; and surprisingly few deists are radical in their attack on them. Herbert hardly mentions them, though he indicates that they could have real meaning only for eyewitnesses.² Charles Blount was the first deist to offer any specific criticism of miracles. He accepts the fact of miracles, but he is uncertain about some of the miracles reported in the Scriptures, and thinks others are exaggerated. In general, he thinks that one must be guided by the church in one's belief in miracles, that belief in any miracles which do not have the support of the church is superstition.³

Toland in his early works takes a conservative position, accepting both the actuality and the evidential value of miracles, but at the same time asserting that any miracle which is contrary to or above reason is a mere fiction.⁴ In his later works, however, he questions many of the alleged miracles of the Old Testament:

Miracles no doubt are there related, yet comparatively very few. I speak with too much caution, when I affirm not one third part to be Miracles in the Pentateuch (for example) of what are commonly thought to be such, and so in proportion of the other books . . .

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I mean that the writers of those books have neither recorded such things for Miracles themselves, nor intended they shou'd be so understood by others.⁵

For instance, the pillar of cloud and fire which guided the Israelites was really only a smoking fire. Indeed, a portable fire was, he insists, commonly used by various Oriental nations to guide large groups of people.⁶

The third Earl of Shaftesbury⁷ expresses an interesting and radical doctrine of miracles in "The Moralists." In the course of the dialogue Philocles, the conservative moralist, says:

The attestation of men dead and gone, in behalf of miracles past and at an end, can never surely be of equal force with miracles present; and of these, I maintain there are never wanting a number sufficient in the world to warrant a divine existence. If there were no miracles nowadays, the world would be apt to think there never were any.⁸

Although Philocles is defending the fact of modern miracles, the other speaker, Theocles, who undoubtedly represents Shaftesbury's position, denies their existence. Shaftesbury's view, therefore, is that if there ever were miracles, they would be present today. In denying their presence today, consequently, he denies their actuality at any time.

Shaftesbury objects to the doctrine of miracles for one of the same reasons we have seen Bolingbroke using against the doctrine of particular Providence—it would subvert the order of nature:

Whilst you are labouring to unhinge Nature,
whilst you are searching heaven and earth
for prodigies, and studying how to miraculise

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everything, you bring confusion on the world, you break its uniformity and destroy that admirable simplicity of order from whence the one infinite and perfect principle is known.⁹

Shaftesbury, however, carries the argument one step farther to say that once you destroy the order of the world, you deny the major premise of the Argument from Design, the very argument you have used to establish God's existence.

Anthony Collins accepts the fact of miracles and belittles their evidential value:

In fine, the *miracles* wrought by Jesus are, according to the gospel-scheme, no absolute Proofs of his being the Messiah, or of the truth of Christianity.¹⁰

Jesus, he believes, is the Messiah only if his miracles and his character are coincident with the prophecies of the Messiah to be found in the old Testament.

Tindal, though he never denies the actuality of miracles, is skeptical in his attitude towards them:

Without judging of a Religion by its internal Marks, there's nothing but Miracles to plead; and Miracles true or false, if they are believ'd (and where are they not?) will have the same Effect: Nay, if Miracles can be perform'd by evil, as well as good Beings, the worst Religion may have the most Miracles, as needing them most.¹¹

Indeed, there is an ancient proverb: "*Miracles for Fools, and Reasons for Wise Men.*"¹² The fact is that there is abundant record of miracles, not unlike the Christian ones, in many pagan histories.¹³ In the last chapter of his *Christianity as Old as Creation* Tindal

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specifically attacks Clarke's conservative attitude towards miracles:

Allowing the Doctor what *Hypothesis* he pleases, in relation to Miracles; yet if the Doctrines themselves, from their internal Excellency, do not give us a certain Proof of the Will of God, no traditional Miracles can do it; because one Probability added to another will not amount to Certainty.¹⁴

Thus, Tindal admits rather grudgingly that there are miracles, but is unwilling to allow them much value as evidence of the divinity of the doctrines they promulgate.

Thomas Woolston, unlike any other deist, concerns himself almost entirely with problems directly related to the miracles. In the first of his six discourses on miracles he tells the reader that he intends to prove the following: first, that Jesus' miracles of healing various diseases are not properly the miracles of the Messiah and do not prove his divine authority; secondly, that the accounts of the miracles recorded by the various evangelists imply "Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities" and that, therefore, many or all of them were never performed but were intended merely as figurative, or allegorical, narratives of the wonderful things Jesus did; thirdly, that Jesus when He points to the miracles as evidence of his divine authority really means to refer not to the famous physical miracles "but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the Spirit; of which these wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows."¹⁵

In each of the first five discourses Woolston follows the general intention mentioned above, examining in turn fifteen miracles to show the inherent absurdity,

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contradiction or offense of each, and then quoting the Fathers as to the correct figurative interpretation of them. In the early discourses he tries to appear conservative, raising no question of the fact of miracles, merely denying them as evidence of the divinity of Jesus by suggesting, as Tindal had done, that Apollonius, Vespasian, and even the devil might perform them.¹⁶ In the later discourse, however, he seems to deny the actuality of miracles, though he intends always to give the impression that he believes in their possibility.

Typical of his method are the following passages from the *Fifth Discourse*:

I am apt to believe with the Fathers, that *Jesus* actually did raise the dead; but then, as these Miracles are only recorded for the *Mystery*, I affirm that none of them, as to the *Letter*, will abide the Test of a Critical Examination, nor stand its Ground against such Exceptions as may be made to them.¹⁷

And this on the resurrection:

Might not a Piece of Fraud be here concerted between Jesus, a subtil Youth, and his Mother and others; and all the Formalities of a Death and Burial contrived, that Jesus, whose Fame for a Worker of Miracles was to be rais'd, might here have an Opportunity to make a shew of a grand one . . . God forbid, that I should suspect there was any Fraud of this Kind here; but the Possibility of it, none can doubt.¹⁸

The resurrection of Lazarus he avows "the most notorious Cheat and Imposture that ever was put upon Mankind."¹⁹

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In the *Sixth Discourse* he becomes so violently heterodox that he feels obliged to protect himself by putting his words into the mouth of another. He pretends to be quoting a letter written by a Jewish rabbi, who condemns Jesus as "so grand a *Deceiver*, Impostor and Malefactor, as no punishment could be too great for him."²⁰ Then he sweetens the dose by declaring that, though Jesus was such an impostor, His doctrines were, for the most part "good, useful and popular, being no other than the Law and Religion of Nature."²¹

Thus, Woolston is the most vituperative, the most radical, and the most limited of deists. He not only denies the actuality and evidential value of miracles but he even attacks the person of Jesus.

Thomas Morgan accepts the fact of miracles and suggests that they are an effective "Means of removing Prejudices, and procuring Attention to what is deliver'd," but he denies their value as "proper Evidence or Proof of the Doctrines themselves"²² for the same reason that Tindal and Woolston do:

There can be no Connection between the Power of working Miracles, and the Truth of Doctrines taught by the Miracle-Workers, . . . [because] false Prophets, the most wicked Seducers, and even the Devil himself may work Miracles.²³

Peter Annet emphasizes the fact that there have been no miracles since the time of the apostles. Inasmuch as there are no recent miracles, he concludes that reason is our most reliable guide. In his *Resurrection of Jesus Considered* he defends Woolston, emphasizing the uncertainty in regard to the facts of the resurrection. There is difference of opinion among the evangelists as well as among the persons to whom the resurrected Jesus

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appeared. Annet wonders why Jesus did not make a public appearance to convince mankind of His resurrection and of the divinity of His mission. Instead "he appeared in such a manner to his Disciples, which scarce convinced themselves; yet sent them to convince the World!"²⁴ At times Annet clearly intends to deny the fact of miracles:

Things asserted, which are contray to the Experience, and Reason of all Mankind; *and to what they know of the Law and usual Course of Nature*, are to the common Sense and Understanding of Men, utterly impossible; because such Assertions contradict all Men's Notions of those Laws, that are known by common Experience.²⁵ A Power to work Miracles is a Power superior to the universal Laws, by which the Systems of Things are governed. This is the Power of Imagination only . . .²⁶

Annet's words are really a crude statement of Hume's conclusive argument against miracles to be found in his *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined . . . There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the

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nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle . . .²⁷

In other words, Annet suggests, miracles are not capable of the same evidence as other historical facts, because they are inherently incredible and improbable. It is only common sense that we give more credence to probable than to improbable stories.²⁸ Moreover, "miracles destroy the Foundations of Truth and Certainty";²⁹ for if miracles can abrogate the laws of nature, man can have nothing certain or absolutely true upon which to base his life; he will merely be subject to a precarious power which governs all.³⁰ Miracles, in the last analysis, can only be proved by additional miracles:

What in the Nature of Things cannot be, cannot by the Nature of Things be proved; and being so, Miracles are *always* necessary to prove themselves; they being *no Links of the great Chain of Nature*, should have a Chain of their own; for nothing can prove a Miracle but a Miracle.³¹

Annet's attitude towards miracles, therefore, is nearly as radical as Woolston's. He not only denies them as evidence but denies their actuality as well.

Thomas Chubb, chronologically the next deist, is far more conservative than Woolston and Annet. He accepts without question the fact of miracles and says that as evidence they establish a probability if not a proof. The facts, he writes, that Christ represented himself as a messenger sent from God and that he performed many wonderful cures

must have *weight* upon the minds of the spectators, and carry with them at least the face of a probability that they were wrought by the power of God, rather than by the agency of

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any other being; and as such were evidences of Christ's divine mission.³²

Conyers Middleton, whose attack on the orthodox doctrines, according to Leslie Stephen, "was incomparably the most effective of the whole deist controversy,"³³ was one of the first deists to apply the historical method to Biblical criticism. To determine the authenticity of the alleged miracles, he suggests, it is necessary to examine the witnesses of the miracles and the facts they allege. If either of these are incredible, the supposed miracles can have no validity; but especially if the facts are incredible, the miracles must be denied.³⁴ After a thorough examination of the miracles of the Fathers, he concludes that they must be denied.³⁵ He is willing to deny the miracles he has examined, even though to accept them on the authority of the church might support the faith, because mere blind acceptance

would certainly destroy the use of all history; by leading us into perpetual errors, and possessing our minds with invincible prejudices, and false notion both of men and things.³⁶

Henry Dodwell, Jr., one of the latest deists, never denies the fact of miracles, except by his virulent tone, though he denies their evidential value in no uncertain terms. To the stock argument that they can be performed by evil spirits as well as good, he adds another argument, that the miracles were not even intended as evidence because great care was frequently taken to conceal them. Their value as evidence today, moreover, he thinks greatly mitigated by the fact that they took place so long ago:

For a Miracle that was ocular Proof to it's Contemporaries, to us is no more than un-

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certain Hearsay. The Light of Conviction therefore, which is thus received can extend no farther than to the Eyewitness himself, [is] lost and extinguished the first Moment it is offered to be imparted.³⁷

Bolingbroke has less to say about miracles than many of the deists; he develops a doctrine of Providence far more thoroughly than he does that of miracles. Indeed, Leland and Warburton, in their attacks on Bolingbroke, do not even refer to his attitude towards miracles.

Bolingbroke is somewhat equivocal in defining the term miracle. As we have seen, when he is discussing the doctrine of Providence, he identifies *particular Providence* and *miracle*; "for," he says, "the miracle consists in the extraordinary interposition as much as in the nature of the thing brought to pass."³⁸ Of course, he admits, if the event in question is contrary to the established course of nature, it is more clearly miraculous than if it is compatible to it; but the miracle seems to consist primarily in its being a divine intercession.³⁹ When he is discussing the miracle *qua* miracle, however, he defines it as an event "out of the ordinary course of nature, and even repugnant to it."⁴⁰

The latter definition was traditional in Bolingbroke's time; it was used both by the orthodox and the heterodox. Locke, for example, writes:

*A miracle then I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine.*⁴¹

And Toland says: "A miracle then is some action exceeding all human power and which the laws of nature

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cannot perform by their ordinary operations.”⁴² Even Hume gives virtually the same definition:

A miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.⁴³

Clarke is the only contemporary philosopher I am familiar with who has a fundamentally different conception of a miracle. Perhaps Bolingbroke is consciously attacking his position. Clarke says:

The true *Definition* of a *Miracle* . . . is this; that it is a work effected in a manner unusual, or different from the common and regular Method of Providence, by the interposition either of God himself, or of some Intelligent Agent superiour to Man, for the Proof or Evidence of some particular Doctrine, or in attestation to the Authority of some particular Person. And if a Miracle so worked, be not opposed by some plainly superior Power; nor be brought to attest a Doctrine either *contradictory* in itself, or *vitious* in its consequences; . . . then the Doctrine so attested must necessarily be lookt upon as Divine, and the Worker of the Miracle entertained as having infallibly a Commission from God.⁴⁴

Clarke disapproves the use of the term *course of nature*, because, as he thinks, nature has no course in and of itself. Matter, the stuff of nature, is inert; it cannot of itself instigate motion of any kind. It can merely be acted upon by God and His creatures. What is called the course of nature, therefore, is really the course of God's Providence, general and particular.⁴⁵ A miracle

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is not contrary to the course of Providence, because Providence is anything God wills it to be. A miracle is merely an infrequent, an unusual, event.

Bolingbroke, like all the writers on miracles in his day, is interested in the authenticity of miracles as evidence of the divinity of the doctrine or religion which they attest. Unlike Clarke and even Tindal,⁴⁶ however, he thinks it unnecessary to examine the internal as well as the external evidence. He thinks it absurd to insist

that miracles themselves are not to be admitted as proofs to a divine original, unless the cause, for which they are wrought, appears to us to be good, and therefore not till the doctrines they attest have been examined.⁴⁷

He acknowledges that such a maxim was perhaps necessary at a time when miracles were easily believed, when there were many evil perpetrators of supposed miracles, but that it is unnecessary today when we know that real miracles can be performed only by the power of God and, consequently, for only such purposes as perfect wisdom and truth sanctify.⁴⁸ Divines have gone to absurd lengths to reason about the internal evidences, whereas all that is necessary is to admit that the Bible is a divinely inspired book. And Bolingbroke goes on to say:

It is, I hope, plain by this time, that far from disbelieving the history of the bible, I assert the authority of it, and endeavour to place it out of the reach of cavil, whilst the divine does the contrary . . .⁴⁹

Here, I fear, Bolingbroke is improvising and asserting something for the sake of argument which he really does

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not believe at all. On occasion he takes a perverse delight in suggesting that the orthodox is heterodox and that he is truly orthodox. He is especially pleased with what he terms "a league between Atheists and Divines."⁵⁰

Bolingbroke continues with his argument saying that in allowing the examination of the internal evidence of the Bible, the divines set a dangerous precedent, for some malicious person may find evidence of the human origin of the book by using the same method they had employed to demonstrate its divine origin.⁵¹ But the real reason why he objects to the theological disputes about the internal evidence is that they "develope the whole secret of a divine economy relative to man."⁵² Indeed,

the presumptuous habits of theology carry them to talk of the plan which they suppose infinite wisdom to have formed, as if they viewed it from an higher stage of intelligence, and knowledge.⁵³

Perhaps, Bolingbroke thinks, we can more accurately determine the evidential value of miracles if we analyze historically the extent to which miracles have been accepted. "When we consider . . . all the stupendous⁵⁴ miracles" that were worked to confirm the Christian revelation, we cannot but conclude that that revelation must have been immediately and universally accepted.⁵⁵ The fact is, however, that even many of the eye-witnesses of those miracles were skeptical:

The learned men among the Jews, the scribes, the pharisees, the rulers of the people, were persecutors of christianity, not converts to it; and the vulgar, as well as they, were so far from believing Jesus to be the Messiah their

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nation expected, or any divine person sent by God, that when Pilate inclined to save him instead of Barabbas a notorious criminal, the whole crowd cried out, "let his blood be on us and our children," and insisted, with a sort of mutinous zeal, on his execution.⁵⁶

Even such a man as Paul was so little impressed by the miracles he had seen and heard about that he zealously attacked Christianity until his miraculous conversion.⁵⁷ Actually, Bolingbroke asserts, the miracles were so far from sufficient to effect "universal conviction" that most men were constrained to accept or reject Christianity at the dictate not of the miracles but of their reason. Of course, there were exceptional cases of men, like Paul, whose "reason had been subdued effectually."⁵⁸ But Paul, along with the others, proselytized by appealing to his audience rationally rather than miraculously, though "he worked, indeed, now and then a miracle, as it was given him to work them."⁵⁹ (In the last statement Bolingbroke seems to accept the fact of miracles, though in a rather depreciating manner.)

If Jesus' contemporaries reacted thus to the Christian miracles, how will we react today? Some of us, the Jews, will admit the possibility that the miracles were as they are said to have been, but will suggest that, if so, they were probably worked by magic, as were the miracles of Apollonius, and that, therefore, their ancestors were justified in rejecting them. Others, the infidels, will brand the miracles as equivocal and what only the credulous and superstitious would believe.⁶⁰ A third group, "good and reasonable" Christians, will conclude that

the means employed to establish and maintain the gospel have not been sufficient to do it

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independently of reason, and by the mere force of authority, from the first publication of it.⁶¹

Good Christians will weigh the testimony of the various witnesses of the miracles and will judge rationally the relative merits of the conflicting claims. Indeed, even in the time of Jesus such was the procedure of the intelligent, for the conflict between the Jews and the converts to Christianity brought about such confusion that a right-thinking person was much puzzled to know whose authority to follow,

and upon the whole he must have despaired of coming to a determination at all by any other way than that of employing the utmost sagacity of his mind, and judging for himself, unless it had pleased God to make him some particular revelation.⁶²

Bolingbroke adds this last exception as a kind of after-thought; he remembers Paul's miraculous conversion.

In general, therefore, Bolingbroke denies the evidential value of miracles. He indicates that if the eye-witnesses of the miracles of Jesus were far from unanimously impressed by them, intelligent men today can hardly be expected to give them much credence. Hefelbower, I believe, is entirely mistaken in saying that Bolingbroke accepts miracles "as confirmations of revelation wrought by God for the establishing of the Christian religion."⁶³

Hefelbower is also wrong in saying that "he accepted miracles as historical facts."⁶⁴ There are some passages in Bolingbroke's writings which seem to indicate that he accepts the actuality of miracles, the most convincing of which is the one Hefelbower quotes—that Christ "proved his assertions at the same time by his mir-

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acles."⁶⁵ This passage, along with the others, however, is misleading out of its context. Bolingbroke, in this instance, though perhaps less obviously than in the other passages, accepts the actuality of miracles for the sake of argument. He wants to establish the fact that the Christian religion as it was taught by Christ was complete and perfect in itself, that the ceremonies, traditions, and dogma added to the original Christianity later by Paul and others were unnecessary appendages, mere "artificial theology." Obviously, it suits his purpose to ascribe to this religion the divine attestation of the miracles.

In discussing the Israelites as the chosen people he says:

Reason will pronounce, that no people was less fit than the Israelites to be chosen for this great trust on every account. They broke the trust continually, and the miracles that were wrought to preserve it, notwithstanding their apostacies, would have preserved it at least as well all over the world . . . [Indeed] the miracles wrought to propagate christianity had greater effect out of Judaea than in it.⁶⁶

In this passage he would seem to accept the fact of miracles, but again we must remember that he is arguing with a specific purpose in mind—to demonstrate that the Jews were unworthy to be the chosen people—and he refers to miracles as a fact because it suits that purpose. The Jews were the more unworthy if they rejected Christianity in spite of the miracles.

On one occasion he accepts the Mosaical history, including the miracles, specifically for the sake of argument: "All the facts contained in the mosaical history are true; be it so, at least for argument sake . . ."⁶⁷

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Only once does Bolingbroke examine a specific miracle to determine its validity. All miracles, he says, must be sensible; even the orthodox Tillotson, Locke, Leslie and Clarke agree with him.⁶⁸ The wedding guests at Cana were convinced that the water had been turned into wine only after they had tasted it; the disciples were convinced that Jesus had risen only when they saw Him. But what of the miracle of the transubstantiation? The wine and the bread or wafer do not turn into perceptible blood and flesh:

The communicants in your church should eat raw flesh, and the priest by his peculiar privilege should drink warm blood; for the transubstantiation is instantaneous: and . . . if the elements in the eucharist continue to the sight and taste the same, they are the same bread and the same wine, after consecration, that they were before.⁶⁹

Those⁷⁰ who would try to avoid the absurdity of the supposed miracle in the transubstantiation by postulating another miracle to explain it merely increase the absurdity. They say

that to exercise our faith he alters the physical constitution of the elect in such a manner, on this occasion, that flesh and blood produce in them the ideas of bread and wine He would assume a miracle and no miracle, or rather a miracle contrived to disguise a miracle, and a fraudulent imposition on our senses for the excellent purpose of exercising faith against knowledge, and in direct contradiction to all the proofs that Christ gave of the divinity of his mission by appealing to the senses of mankind: so that if tran-

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substantiation be true, the whole christian revelation may be false.⁷¹

Towards the end of his discussion of transubstantiation, Bolingbroke says that the doctrine "has been exhausted by abler pens, by that of Tillotson particularly, in a short tract preferable to immense volumes."⁷² Actually he drew his criticism of transubstantiation directly from Tillotson's sermon, "A Discourse against Transubstantiation."⁷³ Compare with Bolingbroke's argument the following:

To shew the absurdity of this doctrine, I shall only ask these few questions . . . Whether it be reasonable to imagine, that God should make that a part of the christian religion which shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the miracles which were wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, the assurance whereof did at first depend upon the certainty of sense. For if the senses of those who say they saw them were deceived, then there might be no miracles wrought; and consequently it may justly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which God hath given to the christian religion would be strong enough to prove it, supposing Transubstantiation to be a part of it: because every man hath as great evidence that Transubstantiation is false, as he hath that the christian religion is true. Suppose then Transubstantiation to be part of the christian doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is miracles: but of all doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a

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miracle. For if a miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which any man hath of the truth of the miracle, he hath of the falsehood of the doctrine, that is the clear evidence of his senses.⁷⁴

From Bolingbroke, however, the criticism sounds far more extreme than from Tillotson, for Bolingbroke has never asserted the fact and evidential value of miracles as Tillotson has.⁷⁵ When Tillotson suggests that accepting the doctrine of transubstantiation as a miracle "shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole"⁷⁶ Christian religion, the reader thinks merely that he is arguing against one particular doctrine. But when Bolingbroke suggests "that if transubstantiation be true, the whole christian revelation may be false," the reader is far more conscious of the fact that Bolingbroke has hinted that all Christian revelation may be false than that he is denying the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Surely, Hefelbower is wrong in concluding that "Bolingbroke's doctrine of miracles is that of the orthodox men of his times!"⁷⁷ On the contrary, Bolingbroke speaks depreciatingly of miracles as evidence of the divinity of the religion they seek to establish; and, though he does not categorically deny the actuality of all miracles, he does deny the actuality of the one miracle he specifically examines.

¹ Bolingbroke's doctrine of miracles could be considered as an aspect of negative deism, but I am discussing it here because it is so closely related to his doctrine of Providence.

² Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 96. Hefelbower's careful analysis of the deists' criticism of miracles (pp. 95ff.) has been very helpful to me in writing this section of my book.

³ Charles Blount, "A Letter to . . . Mr. Gildon," *Misc. Works* (1695), pp. 8ff.

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- 4 John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (London, 1696), p. 147.
- 5 Toland, *Hodegus* (London, 1720), p. 5.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 6ff.
- 7 It is questionable whether or not Shaftesbury should be classified as a deist. He was so classified by his times (Leland, *op. cit.*, pp. 54ff.; J. M. Robertson, *A Short History of Free-thought*, London, 1899, pp. 310-11). Friedrich Ueberweg (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin, 1914-20, III, 125) and Hefelbower (*op. cit.* pp. 177ff.) do not consider him a deist. John Orr (*English Deism*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1934, p. 123) is the only recent writer to consider him a deist. I should be inclined to call him a free-thinker rather than a deist, for, though he is hostile to supernaturalism, and miracles, he does not deny revelation (unless many of his comments are to be taken ironically) and particular Providence.
- 8 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics . . .* (London, 1900), II, 90.
- 9 Shaftesbury, *op. cit.*, II, 92-3.
- 10 Anthony Collins, *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1724), p. 37.
- 11 Tindal, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 170; see also p. 193.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 170; see also p. 193.
- 14 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
- 15 Thomas Woolston, *A Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour* (London, 1728), 5th ed., pp. 1-2.
- 16 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 17 *Ibid.*, *Fifth Discourse* (London, 1728), p. 5.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 20 *Ibid.*, *Sixth Discourse* (London, 1729), p. 5.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 22 Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher* (London, 1737), p. 99.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 24 Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 303.
- 25 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 314-15.
- 27 David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (London, 1889) II, p. 93.
- 28 Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 141. This argument also reminds one of Hume, who closes his "Of Miracles" (*op. cit.*, p. 108) as follows: "So that, upon the whole, we may conclude, that the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determina-

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tion to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

- 29 See footnote above.
- 30 See footnote above.
- 31 See footnote above.
- 32 Chubb, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- 33 Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the 18th Century* (New York, 1902), I, 270.
- 34 Conyers Middleton, *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, from the Earliest Ages through several successive Centuries* (London, 1749), pp. ix-x.
- 35 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 188ff.
- 36 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-1.
- 37 Henry Dodwell, Jr., *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* (London, 1743).
- 38 Bolingbroke, V, 458.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 459.
- 40 *Ibid.*, IV, 226.
- 41 Locke, *Works* (London, 1823), IX, 256.
- 42 Toland, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
- 43 Hume, *op. cit.*, II, 93.
- 44 Clarke, *Evidences . . .*, pp. 311-12.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 300ff.
- 46 See quotations above.
- 47 Bolingbroke IV, 227-8.
- 48 I know of one other expression of the idea that only the power of God can perform miracles, Wm. Fleetwood's *Essay on Miracles* (1702), and I know that only second-hand from Locke (*Works*, IX, 265), for I have not, to date, been able to find the book.
- 49 Bolingbroke, IV, 229.
- 50 See Chapter V.
- 51 Bolingbroke, IV, 229.
- 52 *Ibid.*, IV, 228.
- 53 *Ibid.*, IV, 229.
- 54 This word may be an echo of Clarke who also uses it (*Evidences . . .*, p. 295) to describe the miracles.
- 55 Bolingbroke, IV, 261.
- 56 *Ibid.*, IV, 262.
- 57 *Ibid.*, IV, 264.
- 58 *Ibid.*, IV, 265.
- 59 *Ibid.*, IV, 265.
- 60 *Ibid.*, IV, 262.
- 61 *Ibid.*, IV, 263.
- 62 *Ibid.*, IV, 264.
- 63 Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
- 64 See footnote above.
- 65 Bolingbroke, IV, 314.
- 66 *Ibid.*, IV, 242-3; see also IV, 244.
- 67 *Ibid.*, IV, 229.

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- ⁶⁸ Cf. Tillotson, *op. cit.*, IV, 233, XI, 5048; Locke, *Works*, IX, 256; Charles Leslie, *A Short and Easy Method with the Deists* (London, 1709), pp. 5ff.; and Clarke, *Evidences . . .*, pp. 295ff.
- ⁶⁹ Bolingbroke, IV, 595.
- ⁷⁰ I do not know precisely to whom Bolingbroke refers.
- ⁷¹ Bolingbroke, IV, 595.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, IV, 596.
- ⁷³ Tillotson, *op. cit.*, II, 198-247.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 240ff; cf. Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- ⁷⁵ Tillotson speaks of miracles as "certainly the best and highest external proof of christianity" (*op. cit.*, II, 242).
- ⁷⁶ Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
- ⁷⁷ Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

CHAPTER IV

Optimism and the Problem of Evil

JUST AS Bolingbroke derives his doctrine of miracles from his particular conception of God's attributes, so does he derive his optimistic view of the nature of the world. God's wisdom and power enabled Him to create a world so perfect that it did not require His further intercession in the form of miracles to adjust its course. Such a world, of course, is the best of possible worlds.

The optimistic doctrine, "whatever is, is best," is "often unduly stressed as peculiarly typical of Deism."¹ Not only is optimism not "peculiarly typical of Deism"; it is not typical of it at all. Bolingbroke, in fact, is one of the few deists who emphasizes the doctrine. Tindal merely quotes with approval, an optimistic passage from the *Characteristics*. Annet, to my knowledge the only other deist to approve the doctrine, refers to the consanguinity of man and beast and to the advisability of each man's performing well in his separate station, in a way that might indicate that he subscribed to the conception of the chain of being held by most eighteenth-century optimists.² Annet also expresses more specifically the optimistic view of the world:

If God is a perfect Being, his Works are perfect and cannot be mended; because he could not limit his Wisdom, Goodness, or Power in producing it, without being guilty of Folly,

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Evil, or Weakness. And, if God has in Creation displayed his Attributes, then all Things, at least, collectively taken, and rightly understood, witness the Perfection of his Nature . . .

As the Work is, such is the Workman.³

It is understandable, and even logical, that the deists should not have made an optimistic metaphysics a part of their theory. For the most part, they established God's existence by the teleological argument, the Argument from Design. They inferred God's being and attributes from His works. The wonderful and intricate order and variety of the world persuaded them that the designer thereof must have wisdom and power, because they could not conceive of ordering such an elaborate system of things except by means of those attributes. Now it is logical to use this argument to infer the attributes of the cause of the world, if one is careful to infer only the exact quantity of those attributes which is really demonstrated in the order of the system. But it is not logical to infer first the cause, a wise and powerful God, from the effect, the works of nature, and then to make a new inference from that cause as a premise to the effect as a conclusion. In other words, it is illogical to infer the existence of a wise God from the order and proportion of nature and then to infer something about the order and proportion of nature from the wisdom of God. As Hume says:

The knowledge of the cause being derived solely from the effect, they must be exactly adjusted to each other; and the one can never refer to any thing farther, or be the foundation of a new inference and conclusion.⁴

But the doctrine of optimism, as Bolingbroke postu-

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lates it, is based on exactly the kind of second inference which Hume warns against. It is in this way that Bolingbroke's doctrine of optimism is from the outset illogical. From the order and perfection of the world he infers the existence of a wise and powerful God, and then from the wisdom of God he infers that the world is the best of possible worlds.

Not only is Bolingbroke's procedure here illogical but also his method is inconsistent. He talks much about the superiority of *a posteriori* to *a priori* reasoning. And he attempts to use the *a posteriori* method by beginning with the objects of nature and reasoning from them inductively, in the manner of the "physico-theologists," to the existence of an all-powerful and all-wise God. At this point, however, he reverses his method and reasons *a priori* from the wisdom of God to the perfection of the world.

Though optimism is not characteristic of the deists, it is characteristic of many eighteenth-century philosophers and divines. In England it was most fully expressed as a philosophical doctrine by William King in his *De origine mali* (1702),⁵ and in Europe by Leibniz in his *Théodicée* (1710).⁶ It was also enunciated by Shaftesbury, Jenyns, and others. It is with these men rather than with the deists that Bolingbroke is associating himself when he postulates an optimistic conception of the world.

Bolingbroke, to repeat, infers his optimism from God's infinite wisdom:

Since infinite wisdom not only established the end but directed the means, the system of the universe must be necessarily the best of all possible systems . . .⁷

Lovejoy points out that this doctrine is to be accounted

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for on the basis of what he calls the principle of plenitude, a principle tacitly accepted by most eighteenth-century thinkers. According to this principle,

no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfilled . . . the extent and abundance of the creation must be as great as the possibility of existence and commensurate with the productive capacity of a 'perfect' and inexhaustible Source, and . . . the world is the better, the more it contains.⁸

The principle of plenitude is generally associated with the infinite goodness of God. A certain aspect of His goodness demands a complete fullness and variety of existence. For Bolingbroke, however, plenitude is an aspect of wisdom or power rather than goodness because, as we have seen, he virtually denies God's goodness along with the other moral attributes. Never does Bolingbroke explicitly postulate this principle of plenitude, though the following from a footnote to "Essay the Fourth" suggests it:

The eagle, the fly, the stag, the snail, the whale, and the oister are very different animals no doubt; and the immense variety of the different species of animals appropriated to different elements, and purposes, displays the magnificence of the animal world, and the infinite power of it's author, as the uniformity of all those of the same species shews the design and wisdom of that Being who created them, and appropriated them to the same elements, and to the same purposes.⁹

The fullness of this perfect world Bolingbroke describes in the traditional manner as a chain or gradation

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of being, each link of which is essential to the order of the whole:

The whole world, nay the whole universe is filled with beings which are all connected in one immense design. The sensitive inhabitants of our globe, like the *dramatis personae*, have different characters, and are applied to different purposes of action in every scene. The several parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action: and the whole order and system of the drama would be disordered and spoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his state here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may say to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or superior to what he is, he would be a very preposterous creature in this system. Gulliver's horses made a very absurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as absurd in the place of horses.¹⁰

It is ridiculous for man or any other being in the chain to complain, to wish that he were more perfectly formed or better situated, because if he were in any way differently formed or placed, a link would be missing, and the chain would be useless.¹¹ In other words, the very perfection of the universe consists in the orderly arrangement of the immense variety of beings that compose it. If even the seemingly most insignificant of those beings were out of place, the universe would no longer be perfect. If, for example, man's reasoning powers should be more efficient than they are, the order of intellectual

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beings would be dangerously broken. Man would be raised above his rightful place in the world, and the result would be unfortunate not only for the order of the world but also for man himself, who would become presumptuous of his capacity and so curious that he should discover the extent of his own ignorance.¹²

Since the world is as full as it can possibly be, the chain of being is tightly linked as well as extensive. Not only are there many and various beings, but they are also very closely related to one another. The principle of continuity, consequently, in addition to the principle of plenitude, is operative in this perfect world of ours.¹³ Since the time of Aristotle philosophers have traditionally differentiated man from animal because of his reason, and animal from plant because of the former's sensitive soul. Man was an animal, true, but a rational animal; whereas all other animals were merely sentient, and plants were merely nutritive. But if there is a continuous gradation of being from man down to the lowest animal, and even to the plant, there must at some point in the scale be very little difference between supposedly rational man and supposedly irrational animal. Bolingbroke, in fact, thinks that man's superiority to animal in the last analysis is a superiority not of kind but merely of degree:

It is not only true but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the design of the Author of all nature with the whole tribe of animals, and so closely with some of them that the distance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which constitutes as really, tho not so sensibly as figure, the difference of species, appears, in many instances, small, and would, probably,

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appear still less, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of observing their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by consequence, of human with vegetable life is more remote. But there is such a connection; and it will be manifest to him who considers how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, flourish for a time, wither and die, how many wants they have, such as nourishment, culture and shelter, for instance, as well as to how many distempers and injuries they are exposed, in all which circumstances their connection with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied.¹⁴

Bolingbroke at times suggests that probably every animal thinks.¹⁵ In fact, the more thorough we are in our analysis of the animal world, the more convinced we become that all parts of it show "life and sense, and intelligence, in an inconceivable variety of degrees." What should be the moral effect on those of us who realize the proximity of man to animal? We should more piously than ever worship God, the creator of the intricate system we have examined, and we should feel more humble in the realization of our close connection with the so-called lower animal. But on the profane imagination of many¹⁶ the contrary has been the effect, for instead of looking downward to see their close relationship to animals they have looked upward to imagine their close relationship to God.¹⁷ This is absurd because whereas the distance between man and the lowest animal or even the plant is finite, the distance between man and God is infinite. When we look down towards the other animals, we might, understandably, though unjustly, have a feeling of superiority; but when

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we look up towards God, we should feel only humble and reverent.¹⁸ In this very feeling of reverence for God, Bolingbroke discovers our one claim to superiority over the rest of the animal system—we have the unique capacity for being religious.¹⁹

Inasmuch as the distance between man and God is infinite, it is likely that there are many rational beings above man in the scale of being. Bolingbroke gives another reason, which Lovejoy considers an interesting one,²⁰ for such a conclusion: it should be obvious to man that his intellect far from realizes the potentialities of intellect. Modern discoveries in science, in astronomy in particular, Bolingbroke says, present us with the vast panorama of the universe. We learn that our sun is only one of many, that other suns may be the centers of systems like our own, and that perhaps those other systems may contain inhabitants superior to us in rational power.

When we have this view before our eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings? We who must be conscious, unless we are mad and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man in whom this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of sense, intelligence and reason, up to beings who cannot

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be known by us, because of their distance from us, and whose rank in the intellectual system is even above our conceptions?²¹

When we speculate²² about the gradation of being from man to God, we realize, according to Bolingbroke, that an immeasurable number of beings must separate us from God, a number undoubtedly much larger than the number of beings beneath us in our system. But since the distance between man and God is infinite, and infinity is infinitely divisible, even "the uppermost link of this chain is not supposed to be fastened to the throne of infinite wisdom, nor to be nearer to it than the lowermost."²³ How then can man be anything but humble? On the one hand, he is closely connected with irrational animals and inert plants; on the other, he is connected with myriad orders of superior intelligences, the very highest of which is infinitely distant from the Supreme Being.

It is this conception of the world as a chain of being which is responsible for the bias against anthropomorphism that we have seen Bolingbroke display so prominently in his theories of the attributes and of Providence. You remember he objects to the traditional conception of the moral attributes because it conceives God in terms of human goodness and justice and to the traditional conception of particular Providence because it presupposes that man's welfare is God's chief concern. We shall see that the same anti-anthropomorphic bias provides Bolingbroke with his ultimate solution to the problem of evil.

Like all optimists Bolingbroke is confronted with this problem. He realizes, I think, that it is something of an undertaking to reconcile the existence of what seems

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to be evil with the assertion that this is the best of worlds. Instead of giving his own solution to the problem outright, he first examines two traditional methods of accounting for evil—ditheism and what he calls a mitigated form of ditheism. The former theory accounts for evil by postulating two principles operative in the world, one good the other evil. The good principle has all the attributes of God—power, wisdom, and goodness; but this principle is obliged to contend with a powerful rival principle of evil. The mixture of good and evil to be found in the world results from the eternal struggle between the two principles. Such a theory, Bolingbroke admits, “is full of absurdities.” But it is less absurd than the mitigated ditheism which was adopted by the Christian religion as the explanation of evil, the theory which explains evil as the creation of the devil:

Consider it [ditheism] only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plausible, tho it be not more reasonable, than that of the fall of Adam, and the malice of the devil. The first saves, or seems to save, all the attributes of the good God . . . The last [mitigated ditheism] is full of absurdities likewise; but abstract it from these, and still you find that it saves the divine attributes in no respect . . . The goodness, and even the wisdom of God lye just as much exposed for suffering an inferior being, his creature and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the designs it is assumed that he had, as they would lye, if these designs were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him.²⁴

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Indeed, the doctrine of the Fall of Man as a device to explain the origin of evil in the world, Bolingbroke specifically asserts elsewhere, is inconsistent with "our ideas of goodness or even of wisdom."²⁵

If the traditional theories of evil are unsatisfactory, how is evil to be explained as consistent with the existence of God? The easiest solution for Bolingbroke is to deny that evil exists in opposition to good, to say that "the seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary for the real perfection of the whole."²⁶ Seeming evil is necessary because the perfect wisdom or goodness of God compels Him to create the greatest possible variety of beings. It is good for Him to create the fly, the mosquito, and even the rattle snake, because without them the world would be less full and, therefore, less perfect. Even these apparently undesirable beings have a very real part in the perfection of the whole. It is only, according to Bolingbroke, when we look at the world from an anthropocentric point of view that we think that anything God has created is really evil. The trouble with divines is that they insist on such a view of the world. They are so proud and presumptuous that they are offended when man is not treated as the paragon they would have him be. They fail to see that, far from being the final cause of the world,²⁷ man is only a relatively insignificant being in the great chain of being. True, he is a necessary being but no more necessary than any other. Only if he were affected by no evil and were perfectly happy, could man be considered the purpose for which the Earth was created.²⁸

Bolingbroke does not, however, rely merely on this optimistic solution to the problem of evil. He falls back on his theory of the attributes in a way in which he had been unwilling to do when he was arguing against

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the orthodox conception of Providence. For he suggests that what man calls evil is inconsistent only with the existence of a God conceived in terms of the traditional moral attributes. Once we deny those moral attributes, as he had, in effect, done, the inconsistency is abrogated. We need only deny that the human conception of goodness applies to the nature of God to solve the problem of evil.²⁹

Bolingbroke, you see, considers goodness, unlike wisdom and power, an anthropocentric term. For him it is a meaningless word unless it is applied to man. Just why power and wisdom are to be considered more nearly objective terms, he never makes clear. At any rate, goodness, being anthropocentric, loads the dice in favor of man. If God is to be described as good, he must have an infinite abundance of those qualities we associate with a good man; he must be, in effect, a kind of superior man. As such he is bound to consider primarily the welfare of man, just as a good man considers the welfare of his fellow men. He is certain, therefore, to arrange the system of the world for man's special benefit. But God is not to be so conceived.

Here again Bolingbroke's argument really is based on his anti-anthropomorphic bias. Evil is not inconsistent with the existence of God because God is not an anthropomorphic God whose essential attribute is goodness. Evil is inconsistent with human goodness, not with the existence of God.

Furthermore, says Bolingbroke, if one accepts the divine's notion that God's goodness is operative in the world and concerned with the welfare and happiness of man, the logical result would be absurd:

If goodness ought to be, as they assume, the sole directing principle in this case, and if

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wisdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is infinite; than which no greater absurdity can be conceived.³⁰

Actually, wisdom is the directing principle of God's conduct, and it is perfectly logical that the effect of such a principle be proportionate to the infinite cause. It is not absurd to say that God "made a system of creation infinitely wise and the best of all possible systems."³¹

After explaining the existence of evil on the basis of his philosophical presuppositions, Bolingbroke approaches the problem from a more pragmatic point of view. Just what, he asks, is the evidence that evil is such a problem in the world? One must consider first the quantity and then the distribution of evil. Wollaston, Clarke, and other divines emphasize the great amount of evil in the world and the misery of man's lot, but Bolingbroke is sure that "the real evils, that men suffer, are not in truth so great as they appear in these exaggerated representations of them."³² Indeed, he thinks "that the general state of mankind in the present scheme of providence is a state not only tolerable, but happy."³³ The positive proof that every man has more good to enjoy than evil to suffer, either at present or in prospect, is that he is unwilling to forego his present existence. Applying this reasoning to Wollaston himself, Bolingbroke says:

I am persuaded . . . that any charitable person who had offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miseries he complained of in such lamentable terms, would have been very ill received.³⁴

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God has amply provided for the happiness of all His creatures, though the happiness of man "exceeds that of his fellow creatures, at least as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs."³⁵

Man is subject to two kinds of evil, physical and moral.³⁶ Physical evils are not much of a problem because of their rarity. It is true, there are occasional earthquakes, floods, and pestilences; but they are merely contingent events to be expected in a system which is operated by means of general laws. In Bolingbroke's words: "They may be considered as the mere effects, natural tho contingent, of matter and motion in a material system put into motion under certain general laws."³⁷ God is by no means to be blamed for these physical evils, for a perfect world should be governed by general rather than particular laws. Moral evils, however, offer a more serious problem, for man is frequently beset by them. These evils arise as a result of the misuse of the faculty of free will which God has bestowed upon man. Man makes the wrong choice, and evil results. Bolingbroke mentions a number of extreme cases in which men have freely chosen to hire themselves out to row in the galleys or to dig in the mines; others have volunteered to pass their lives as ascetics at La Trappe or to torment themselves in the manner of the Fakirs of the East.³⁸ Certainly God is no more to be blamed for the moral than for the physical evil in the world. Once He has given man, pursuant to His creation of the perfect world, the privilege of choosing between many alternatives, He is not responsible for man's choice of the wrong alternative. Thus, the greatest evils that men suffer "are from themselves, not from God."³⁹

As for the distribution of evil, men like Wollaston

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question how it is consistent with God's justice that the virtuous should often suffer and the wicked go unpunished. The obvious answer for Bolingbroke to make is that God is not just in the human sense of the word; for justice is one of the moral attributes which he has virtually denied. Instead of relying on this argument, however, he denies Wollaston's premise, that the virtuous are unhappy and the wicked, happy:

Look round the world antient and modern, you will observe the general state of mankind to increase in happiness, or decline to misery, as virtue or vice prevails in their several societies.⁴⁰

In the last analysis, Bolingbroke comes back to his antipathy for anthropomorphism:

Shall we hear without horror the men spoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as physical plan, when they found accusations against the goodness, justice, and wisdom of God, merely on their pride, when they assume, on no other foundation, that man is or ought to have been the final cause of the creation . . .; in short, when they go so far as to impute to God the introduction or permission of those very evils which neither God is answerable for, if I may use such an expression, nor nature, nor reason, but our own perverse wills, and the wrong elections we make?⁴¹

I have suggested that Bolingbroke the optimist is to be associated not with the deists but with certain divines and with Leibniz, Shaftesbury, and Jenyns. Of the divines, in addition to King whom I shall discuss later, Tillotson, Clarke, Wollaston, and Leland all express an

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optimistic conception of the world. Tillotson describes the perfection of the world as evidence of God's wisdom. Moreover, he postulates the principle of plenitude, which, as we have seen, underlies Bolingbroke's optimism:

It is very agreeable both to the goodness and wisdom of God, that there should be this variety in the creatures, and that they should be of several degrees of perfection, being made for several uses and purposes, and to be subservient to one another, provided they all contribute to the harmony and beauty of the whole.⁴²

He also develops a doctrine of evil closely resembling King's; for he analyzes the three traditional kinds of evil—evils of imperfection, of affliction, and of sin—showing how they are consistent with the goodness and wisdom of God.⁴³ He has one idea, however, which both King and Bolingbroke would disapprove: "All things are made so useful for man, who was designed to be the chief inhabitant of this visible world."⁴⁴ Clarke, Wollaston, and Leland agree with Bolingbroke that God has created the best possible system, but disagree that it is the best exclusive of a future life. They are so much impressed with the evil and misery in this life that they think a future life is necessary to vindicate God's goodness and justice.⁴⁵ The point I want to make is that Clarke and Wollaston, whom Bolingbroke criticises as pessimistically exaggerating the evil in the world, differ from Bolingbroke, in this instance, in their strong affirmation of a future state of rewards and punishments. They would agree with Bolingbroke that "whatever is, is best," but they would define *whatever is* dif-

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ferently; they would apply that term to the future as well as the present life.

The optimists whose theories bear the closest relationships to Bolingbroke's, are Leibniz, Shaftesbury, King, and Jenyns. Leibniz's doctrine is similar to Bolingbroke's, but I think it unlikely that Bolingbroke owes any real debt to him for a number of reasons. In the first place, Leibniz's works were not readily available—they are still not, for that matter—because so much of his philosophy was to be found only in his correspondence. Even his *Théodicée* was less easily available than Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* or King's *De origine mali*. Secondly, Bolingbroke was probably prejudiced against Leibniz as the opponent of Locke. Thirdly, Bolingbroke gives no direct evidence of familiarity with Leibniz's works. He merely speaks depreciatingly of his "pre-established harmony" and his "sufficient reason"⁴⁶ and tells how he "dug for gold in the ordure of the schools" and how he used a "vocabulary of barbarous terms . . . to propagate an unintelligible jargon."⁴⁷ In short, I believe Bolingbroke merely reflects the attitude towards Leibniz which was characteristic of Englishmen of his day.⁴⁸

The last of the philosophers mentioned above, Jenyns, was too late to have influenced Bolingbroke's doctrine of optimism, for his *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* wasn't published until 1757—six years after Bolingbroke's death.

It is to Shaftesbury and King, therefore, that we must look for the source of Bolingbroke's optimism. Most of the commentators take Bolingbroke's indebtedness to Shaftesbury for granted. Stephen tells us that "Bolingbroke took many hints from his pages."⁴⁹ Robertson refers to the fact that Shaftesbury's "philosophy was the basis of Bolingbroke's."⁵⁰ Ueberweg says, "In seinen

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ethischen Anschauungen und seiner Glückslehre berührt Bolingbroke sich mit Shaftesbury.”⁵¹ Moore writes that “it is certain that Bolingbroke . . . drew much of his own system from Shaftesbury.”⁵² Willey speaks of Shaftesbury’s philosophy as “the optimistic theory which . . . reaching Pope chiefly through Bolingbroke is versified in *The Essay on Man*.”⁵³ But it is very difficult to prove that Bolingbroke was influenced to such an extent by Shaftesbury, for there is not a single direct reference to Shaftesbury in his works. This is the more strange as Bolingbroke is accustomed to mention the names of the philosophers he discusses, even if they are his contemporaries. Robertson suggests a solution to this problem, by referring to a passage in Chapter II of Shaftesbury’s “Miscellaneous Reflections”⁵⁴ in which some statesman is castigated as follows:

The greater the genius or character is of such a person,⁵⁵ the greater is his slavery and heavier his load . . . For let us suppose our courtier not only an Englishman, but of the rank and stem of those old English patriots who were wont to curb the licentiousness of our court, arraign its flatterers, and purge away those poisons from the ear of princes; let us suppose him of a competent fortune and moderate appetites, without any apparent luxury or lavishment in his manners: what shall we, after this, bring in excuse, or as an apology, for such a choice as this?⁵⁶

In a footnote Robertson says:

The reference here is doubtless to Harley’s colleague, Henry St. John, afterwards Vis-

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count Bolingbroke. His family and circumstances and early leanings answer to the description in the text; and he is the only public man of the day describable as a genius. Shaftesbury and he, so sympathetic in their philosophical opinions, had probably been acquaintances; and his and Harley's deliberate adoption in 1710, of a High Church policy, as well as his previous support of the Occasional Conformity Bill fits closely with the description of a "preference of subtlety and indirectness to true wisdom, open honesty, and uprightness." After such a criticism it is quite intelligible that Bolingbroke should make no acknowledgment of his philosophical debt to the author of the *Characteristics*.⁵⁷

It seems to me far from doubtless that the reference is to Bolingbroke. It is true Bolingbroke did stem from a distinguished noble family, and perhaps he is "the only public man of the day describable as a genius." But does Robertson give the right definition to the word genius? Isn't it intended here in its usual eighteenth-century sense, meaning the controlling spirit, or character, of a person? Moreover, Bolingbroke's fortune is to be described as more than "competent," and his appetites, to judge from all reports, were anything but "moderate." Also there is said to have been more than a little "luxury" and "lavishment in his manners." In short, I can think of no good reason why this passage should refer to Bolingbroke. Perhaps Shaftesbury's portrait refers to no particular man at all, but is only an imaginary "character."

It is possible that Bolingbroke may have been offended by the following passage from *Advice to an Au-*

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thor, which he along with Warburton,⁵⁸ might have taken for an attack on Locke:

In reality, how specious a study, how solemn an amusement is raised from what we call philosophical speculations, the formation of ideas, their compositions, comparisons; agreement, and disagreement! . . . why do I concern myself in speculations about my ideas? What is it to me, for instance, to know what kind of idea I can form of space?⁵⁹

But neither the passage referred to by Robertson nor the one just quoted offers any real explanation of why Bolingbroke never mentions Shaftesbury. The easiest explanation would be that Bolingbroke was not appreciably influenced by the *Characteristics*, a conclusion which is supported by the fact that I have not been able to find any verbal parallels between it and the works of Bolingbroke.

There are, however, parallels between Shaftesbury's doctrine of optimism and Bolingbroke's. Like Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury is cognizant of the principle of plenitude, and he states it more explicitly than Bolingbroke does: "Whatever is possible in the whole, the nature or mind of the whole will put in execution for the whole's good."⁶⁰ Like Bolingbroke also, he recognizes the continuity between the human and animal systems:

How is it you complain of the unequal state of man, and of the few advantages allowed him above the beasts? What can a creature claim, little differing from them, or whose merit appears so little above them, except in wisdom and virtue, to which so few conform?⁶¹

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Indeed, he continues, man is inferior to beast in many ways; only his reason gives him superiority, and beast has instincts which in some instances are more reliable than reason.⁶²

Shaftesbury's discussion of evil closely resembles Bolingbroke's, though he doesn't use the terms physical and moral evil. First, he denies real evil in optimistic fashion:

If everything which exists be according to a good order, and for the best, then of necessity there is no such thing as real ill in the universe, nothing ill with respect to the whole.⁶³ . . . So that we cannot say of any being that it is wholly and absolutely ill, unless we can positively show and ascertain that what we call ill is nowhere good besides, in any other system, or with respect to any other order or economy whatsoever.⁶⁴

Later, he cautions against exaggerating the quantity and distribution of evil in the world:

What therefore can be worse done in the cause of a Deity than to magnify disorder, and exaggerate (as some zealous people do) the misfortunes of virtue, so far as to render it an unhappy choice with respect to this world? They err widely who propose to turn men to the thoughts of a better world by making them think so ill of this. For to declaim in this manner against virtue to those of a looser faith, will make them the less believe a Deity, but not the more a future state.⁶⁵

As many as are the difficulties which Virtue has to encounter in this world, her force is yet superior. Exposed as she is here, she is not

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however abandoned or left miserable . . .
Her present portion is sufficient to show Providence already engaged on her side.⁶⁶

Bolingbroke's optimism, therefore, resembles Shaftesbury's in general outline. Both describe this as the best of worlds; both recognize the principle of plenitude; both emphasize the continuity between the human and animal creation; both think virtue of greater force than vice in the world. Their theories differ, however, in a number of significant particulars. Shaftesbury derives his optimism from observation of nature or possibly from God's benevolence, though he never makes that clear; whereas Bolingbroke infers his from God's wisdom. Bolingbroke emphasizes the conception of the chain of being far more than Shaftesbury does, and he distinguishes physical from moral evil more obviously than Shaftesbury does. An important aspect of Shaftesbury's optimism, his rapturous and nearly pantheistic admiration for the perfection of nature,⁶⁷ is entirely absent in Bolingbroke. An equally important principle of Bolingbroke's doctrine, that man is not the final cause of the world, is lacking in Shaftesbury.

Since there are neither direct references to Shaftesbury in Bolingbroke's works nor any known verbal parallels and since the resemblances between their doctrines of optimism are no more impressive than their differences, it is impossible to prove that Bolingbroke is indebted to Shaftesbury for his optimistic conception of the world.⁶⁸

The relationship between Bolingbroke and King is not so uncertain as that between Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury, because in his works Bolingbroke mentions King by name nine times,⁶⁹ and gives two references in footnotes to specific sections of *De origine*

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mali.⁷⁰ Moreover, his attitude towards King, unlike his attitude towards Clarke, Wollaston, Warburton, and most other divines, is almost entirely favorable; he speaks of him as "a very respectable writer."⁷¹

King's doctrine of optimism, as one might expect, may be the prototype of Bolingbroke's. In the first place, he says, God created the world as perfect as was possible with His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.⁷² If there is any evil in the world, it is such as infinite power, wisdom and goodness could not prevent. It is true, nevertheless, that there seems to be evil in the world, but even granting the existence of evil for the moment, there is more good than evil:

It is manifest that tho' Good be mixed with Evil in this Life, yet there is much more Good than Evil in Nature, and every Animal provides for its Preservation by Instinct or Reason, which it would never do, if it did not think or feel its Life, with all the Evils annexed, to be much preferable to Non-existence.⁷³

We have seen Bolingbroke use the same argument to prove man's state not so miserable as many divines would have it be.

King lays great emphasis on the principle of plenitude and the related conception of the chain of being. God's infinite goodness, he says,

oblig'd him to produce external things; which things, since they could not possibly be perfect, the Divine Goodness preferr'd imperfect ones to none at all. Imperfection then arose from the Infinity of Divine Goodness.⁷⁴

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Of the chain of being he writes:

In this Scale then God will be the *Top*, and Nothing the *Bottom*; and how much farther any thing is distant from nothing, it is so much the more perfect, and approaches nearer to God. How much any thing can resemble God in Perfection, or how nearly approach to him we know not; but we are certain that there is always an infinite Distance between them.⁷⁵

Again the resemblance to Bolingbroke is close, for Bolingbroke also says that the distance between the highest intelligence and God is infinite.⁷⁶

King's analysis of the kinds of evil, though much more complete, might well be the source of Bolingbroke's theory. He develops in some detail the evil of imperfection⁷⁷ which we have seen Bolingbroke merely hint at. He also analyzes carefully natural and moral evil, showing how the former arises from the matter of which things are made⁷⁸ and the latter from wrong election.⁷⁹

Lastly, King emphasizes, what becomes Bolingbroke's favorite point, that the universe rather than man is the final cause of the world,⁸⁰ and that, therefore, perfect happiness "cannot fall to the lot of any Man in this present State, nor is it a Debt due from God to a Creature, tho' never so innocent." The most that can be expected is moderate happiness.⁸¹

Clearly King is the source of Bolingbroke's optimism rather than Shaftesbury, for Bolingbroke's doctrine differs from King's in no important respect, whereas several of Bolingbroke's most important ideas are not to be found in Shaftesbury, nor Shaftesbury's in his.⁸²

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- ¹ Ernest C. Mossner, *Bishop Butler* . . . (New York, 1936), p. 60.
- ² Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.
- ⁴ Hume, *op. cit.*, II, 113.
- ⁵ An optimistic theory of the world, however, was preached by John Tillotson, whose *Posthumous Sermons* were published in 1694, at an earlier day (*op. cit.*, VIII, 3413ff., 3415ff., 3418).
- ⁶ King and Leibniz apparently derived their theories independently and nearly simultaneously. (See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Cambridge, Mass., 1936, n. 29, p. 361.)
- ⁷ Bolingbroke, V, 332; see also V, 341, 343, 344.
- ⁸ Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- ⁹ Bolingbroke, IV, 257.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 377; see also V, 322, 339-40, 482, 483.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 483-4.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, V, 377-8.
- ¹³ Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-6.
- ¹⁴ Bolingbroke, V, 375-6; see also V, 389.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 446.
- ¹⁶ Bolingbroke is referring to Cudworth and other followers of Plato.
- ¹⁷ Bolingbroke, IV, 152.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 468.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 469-70; IV, 71.
- ²⁰ Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
- ²¹ Bolingbroke, V, 329-30.
- ²² Bolingbroke makes it entirely clear that he knows he is merely speculating about the intelligences superior to man: "What has been here said concerning the intelligent inhabitants of other planets is purely hypothetical. It can pass for nothing more. But I am sure that it is much more consistent, and more conceivable than the other system, which prevails in our days as it did in those of old. The system of an intellectual world, a world of immaterial ideas and of spiritual natures." (IV, 178).
- ²³ Bolingbroke, IV, 178-9.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 320-1; see also V, 487.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 371.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 381.

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- 27 *Ibid.*, V, 258, 320, 333, 335, 337-8, 343, 344, 345, 422-3, 467, 487.
- 28 *Ibid.*, V, 422.
- 29 *Ibid.*, V, 341.
- 30 *Ibid.*, V, 341.
- 31 *Ibid.*, V, 341.
- 32 *Ibid.*, V, 380.
- 33 *Ibid.*, V, 380.
- 34 *Ibid.*, V, 382-3.
- 35 *Ibid.*, V, 383-4.
- 36 Bolingbroke never clearly postulates the third traditional type of evil, the evil of imperfection, the evil inherent in every creature because he is created out of nothing and lacks the perfections of his Creator, though the following may suggest it: "In every human invention and institution, there is something that is imperfect, something that falls short of the end that we propose, by defect of knowledge, or defect of power." (V, 475; see also V, 340).
- 37 Bolingbroke, V, 381.
- 38 *Ibid.*, V, 380.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 380.
- 40 *Ibid.*, V, 389; see also V, 564-5.
- 41 *Ibid.*, V, 389; see also V, 564-5.
- 42 Tillotson, *op. cit.*, VIII, 3557.
- 43 *Ibid.*, VIII, 3557.
- 44 *Ibid.*, VIII, 3418.
- 45 See, for example, Clarke, *A Discourse . . .*, pp. 132ff.; Leland, *op. cit.*, II, 275ff.
- 46 Bolingbroke, III, 530, 552-3; IV, 109; V, 415.
- 47 *Ibid.*, III, 321.
- 48 For an appraisal of Leibniz's influence in eighteenth-century England see W. R. Sorley, *A History of English Philosophy* (New York, 1921), pp. 236 and 290-1; and Herbert W. Carr, *Leibniz* (London, 1929), p. 191.
- 49 Stephen, *op. cit.*, II, 18.
- 50 John M. Robertson, "Introduction," Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (New York, 1900), I, xiv.
- 51 Friedrich Ueberweg, *op. cit.*, III, 220.
- 52 C. A. Moore, "Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760," *P. M. L. A.*, XXXI (1916), 300. Moore entirely accepts Robertson's explanation of Bolingbroke's failure to give Shaftesbury credit. See also Moore's article, "Did Leibniz Influence Pope's *Essay*?", *J. E. G. P.* XVI (1917), 92.
- 53 Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background* (London, 1940), pp. 61-2.
- 54 Published in *Characteristics . . .*, *op. cit.*, II, 157ff in 1711.
- 55 *I.e.*, one who in seeking court preferment has become a royal flatterer.
- 56 Shaftesbury, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 261-2.
- 57 John M. Robertson, ed., Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, II, 261-2.

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- 58 William Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses* (London, 1738-41), I, xxvii.
- 59 Shaftesbury, I, 194-5.
- 60 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, II, 109.
- 61 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, II, 67.
- 62 *Ibid.*, II, 72ff.
- 63 *Ibid.*, I, 239.
- 64 *Ibid.*, I, 246.
- 65 *Ibid.*, II, 58-9.
- 66 *Ibid.*, II, 58.
- 67 *Ibid.*, II, 98.
- 68 For a comparison of Bolingbroke's and Shaftesbury's ethical theories see Chapter VII.
- 69 Bolingbroke, V, 338, 476, 483, 524-5, 533, 534, 536, 539-40, 541.
- 70 *Ibid.*, V, 338, 483. Lovejoy (*op. cit.*, p. 359) says "Since it was in 1730 that Pope and Bolingbroke were 'deep in metaphysics,' and since by 1731 the first three Epistles seem to have been completed (*cf.* Courthope, V. 242), it must have been from the Latin original, not Law's translation, that the poet and his philosophic mentor drew." Lovejoy's conclusion is supported by the fact Bolingbroke's references are to the Latin edition.
- 71 *Ibid.*, V, 524.
- 72 William King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, Edmund Law, trans. (Cambridge England, 1739), p. 63.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 75 *Ibid.*, pp. 120-1.
- 76 See pp. 104-105 above.
- 77 King, *op. cit.*, pp. 116ff.
- 78 *Ibid.*, pp. 146ff.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 225ff.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 453.
- 82 For confirmation of my conclusion see Lovejoy, "Optimism and Romanticism," *P. M. L. A.*, XLII (1927), 926.

CHAPTER V

Immortality

THE DOCTRINE of the immortality of man's soul was important enough in the deistic controversy for Clarke to distinguish one sort of deist by his denial of it. In his *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion* Clarke analyzes the deists into four kinds, the third of which is heterodox chiefly in his denial of immortality.¹

The earliest deists, Herbert of Cherbury and Charles Blount, accepted life after death as one of the universally accepted notions of religion.² For them the idea of a future state of rewards and punishments was innate. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, however, Locke not only denied innate ideas but also asserted that we can no more rationally prove the immateriality than the immortality of the soul.³ He says that it is "not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter *a faculty of thinking*, than that he should superadd to it *another substance with a faculty of thinking*."⁴ Then he cautiously adds, "I say not this, that I would any way lessen the belief of the soul's immateriality."⁵ Because we cannot demonstrate the soul's immateriality and immortality, it does not follow that we must deny them. In this case, as in many others, we must be content with probability and faith, and

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both, according to Locke, dictate a belief in the immateriality and immortality of the human soul:

All the great ends of morality and religion are well enough secured, without philosophical proof of the soul's immateriality; since it is evident, that he who made us at the beginning to subsist here, sensible intelligent beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can and will restore us to the like state of sensibility in another world, and make us capable there to receive the retribution he has designed to men, according to their doings in this life.⁶

Locke's dictum that neither the immateriality nor the immortality of the soul can be proved led to an extensive controversy in the early eighteenth century. Henry Dodwell published in 1706 *An Epistolary Discourse proving from the Scriptures and the first Fathers that the Soul is a principle naturally mortal, but immortalized actually by the pleasure of God*. The same year Samuel Clarke attacked Dodwell's position in *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell*, accusing him of teaching "that the Soul of Man is naturally mortal, and will of it self perish and come to nothing, if not upheld by the extraordinary Power of God, in a praeternatural way."⁷ Instead, Clarke says, he should teach that the soul is naturally immortal and could be mortal only by the special will of God.⁸ The following year the deist, Anthony Collins, entered the controversy with an attack on Clarke's view in *A Letter to the Learned Mr. Henry Dodwell*. Whereupon Clarke countered with *A Defence of an Argument Made use of in a Letter to Mr. Dodwell*. The controversy continued until Clarke had written four defences of his original *Letter* and Collins as many attacks.⁹

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It is Collins' position which is particularly interesting here. The whole argument turns on whether or not the soul is to be considered immaterial. As Collins says, "The principal Argument for the Natural Immortality of the Soul is founded on the Supposition of its Immateriality."¹⁰ Clarke endeavors to prove it immaterial by showing that matter cannot possibly have added to it the power of thinking. Matter, he says, is composed of separate and distinct parts, and as these parts cannot be considered individual conscious beings and only individual conscious beings have the power of thinking, therefore, the body which is merely groups of these parts, cannot be considered such and cannot have the power of thinking. Collins on the other hand, can see no reason why parts grouped together cannot be an individual conscious being:¹¹

Let us instance for example in a *Rose*. *That* consists of several Particles, which separately and singly want a Power to produce that agreeable Sensation we experience in them when united. And therefore either each of the Particles in that Union contributes to the Individual Power, which is the external Cause of our Sensation; or else God Almighty super-adds the *Power* of producing that Sensation in us upon the Union of the Particles. And this, for ought I can see, may be the case of Matter's Thinking. Those Particles which compose the Brain, may under that Modification either have the Power of Thinking super-added to them by the Power of God, though singly and separately they may not have the Power of Thinking.¹²

But even if you grant that the soul is immaterial,

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Collins questions whether its immortality necessarily follows:

Nothing is proved naturally immortal by the supposition of the Soul's Immateriality, but the Substance of the Soul. Now the Soul is supposed to be a Thinking Immaterial Being; and unless a Thinking Immaterial Being can be proved naturally Immortal, the Soul cannot be proved naturally Immortal.¹³

Such a proof can be made, Collins thinks, only by showing a necessary and inseparable connection between an immaterial being and thinking, which he has demonstrated cannot be done because the power of thinking may be superadded to a material being. Therefore,

we have as much reason to believe, that Thinking is an Action which may commence after the existence of its Subject, and may perish or cease to exist, its Subject still remaining.¹⁴

Finally,¹⁵ Collins suggests we accept Clarke's premises for the sake of argument and see what will be the consequence:

Let us suppose, that from the Power of Thinking, or Individual Consciousness, we can prove the Immateriality of the Soul, and from its Immateriality prove its natural Immortality, and then see what will be the consequence. All the numerous sensible Creatures in the Universe are put in the same condition with Man, and made capable of eternal Happiness as well as he. Now to avoid this Consequence, there are two Things principally urged.

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1. That all those Creatures (which I call Sensible) are only mere Machines:

Or,

2. That their souls shall be annihilated upon the Dissolution of their Bodies.

To the First I answer, that Experience as much convinces us, that they perceive, think &c. as that Men do . . . But if after all, Brutes are only mere Machines, the Difficulty of proving the Soul Immaterial will be increased. For if the Operations of Brutes are not sufficient to distinguish them from Clocks and Watches, the Operations of Men will not prove *them* to be superior to Machines.¹⁶

Clearly, Collins in attacking Clarke's doctrine of immortality is defending Locke's theory that neither the immateriality nor the immortality of the soul can be rationally demonstrated, and that God can add the power of thinking to matter. His intentions, however, are entirely different from Locke's, even though he ends his *Letter* by the orthodox avowal:

That under the Uncertainty in point of Reason, both of the Soul's Immateriality and Natural Immortality, I am not the less certain of Man's Immortality from the Gospel of Christ . . .¹⁷

Whereas Locke sincerely affirms his faith in immortality, Collins intends to disprove immortality, and he affirms his faith in the doctrine in an entirely perfunctory manner.

Not all deists are so radical in their attitude towards immortality as Collins is. Tindal and Morgan, for example, are quite orthodox. Tindal refers to "the next life" as a certainty not to be doubted, and says that

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good men shall be perfectly happy there.¹⁸ Morgan contrasts the corruption and degeneracy of this world with the perfection of the "future invisible World"¹⁹ and uses the moral argument relied on by Tillotson, Clarke, Wollaston, and others to prove that such a future world exists. It is unthinkable, he says, that God could permanently allow the virtuous to suffer and the wicked to thrive; there must, therefore, be a future state in which the virtuous are rewarded and the wicked punished.²⁰

We have already seen that Bolingbroke refuses to admit that the virtuous suffer and the wicked thrive in this life to the extent that the divines and Morgan would have them. He particularly disapproves the moral argument that they use to demonstrate that a future state of rewards and punishments is a reality. They argue that the present distribution of rewards and punishments is so inequitable that in order to vindicate the justice of God it is necessary to postulate a future state in which that distribution will be perfectly equitable. Such an argument, Bolingbroke insists, is virtually heretical; in effect, it makes the existence of God dependent upon the validity of a mere hypothesis. For if the distribution of good and evil in this world is not readjusted later, God cannot be just and cannot, Bolingbroke concludes—forgetting for the moment his denial of the moral attributes—exist at all:

They attempt to prove [he says] that there is no God, if there is no future state; instead of insisting that since there is a God there may be a future state.²¹

They proceed in this manner until God
has been tried, convicted, and condemned, for
his government of the world, on the general

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principles of human justice; like the governor of a province, or any other inferior magistrate.²²

On this alleged position Bolingbroke comments as follows: The divines who use the moral argument to establish a future state of rewards and punishments are little better than atheists. They at least are in league with the atheists;²³ for they agree with them that this is a most miserable world, a world in which good people are afflicted and evil ones prosperous. How anyone can teach the perfections of God by emphasizing the imperfections of His world seems a mystery. Rather the neophyte will be persuaded that God does not exist. One must conclude that the atheists have a stronger position than the divines. Holding such opinions, Bolingbroke is hardly likely to tolerate as support of theism a hypothetical future state of rewards and punishments.²⁴

The moral argument for immortality, or rather for a future state of rewards and punishments,²⁵ is bad for another reason: it makes use of "an inverted order of reasoning."²⁶ By this I think Bolingbroke means that it is an argument *a priori* from the justice of God to the phenomena rather than from the phenomena *a posteriori* to the particular problem involved.

Bolingbroke, therefore, in his doctrine of immortality is not to be associated with moderate deists like Tindal and Morgan. Like Collins he was attracted by Locke's statement that it is possible for God to give the power of thinking to a material system. He recognized that the problem of immortality was so closely related to metaphysics, that whether or not one accepted the traditional doctrine of immortality depended logically on one's conception of substance.²⁷ If one accepts, for

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example, the Cartesian dualism (that there are two substances, body and soul), it is possible to assume "the soul to be a spiritual substance, and a spiritual substance to be unextended, indivisible and therefore immortal."²⁸ But do we really know, Bolingbroke questions, that the soul is a spiritual, unextended, indivisible substance? Descartes considers the essence of soul to be thought, but is there any necessary relationship between thought and the substance we call soul or spirit? Is there the same essential relationship between soul and thought as there is between body and extension and solidity?²⁹ Bolingbroke thinks not:

- That we live, and move, and think according to certain human modes of thinking, and that
- there must be something in the constitution of our system of being beyond the known properties of matter to produce such phaenomena as these, are undeniable truths. But here certainty ends. What that something is we know not, and surely it is time we should be convinced that we cannot know it.³⁰

Of Spirit, Bolingbroke is convinced in opposition to Locke, we cannot have so accurate an idea as of body:

I do not pretend to deny the possible existence of spiritual, that is, according to the present notion, of immaterial beings . . . But this I say, that we have not the same proof of the existence of unextended and spiritual, as we have of extended and solid substance.³¹

To explain why we do not have the same proof of the existence of spirit as we have of matter, Bolingbroke uses Lockean epistemology. We have not the same knowledge, he says, on which to base the proofs of the

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existences of the two substances. We received our ideas of matter from sensation, which ideas "do reach up to the substance that causes them"; whereas we receive our ideas of spirit from reflection, and these ideas do not approximate the nature of the substance that causes them.³² In fact, what is the primary idea or essence of spirit? Descartes says it is thought, but this proposition Bolingbroke denies, asserting with Locke that he has "'one of those dull souls that does not perceive itself to contemplate ideas' . . . I continue to live but not to think during the soundest sleep."³³ Thus, Bolingbroke can find no philosophical grounds upon which to conclude that spirit exists.

Up to this point, Bolingbroke seems to be a crass materialist, but lest he should be called such, he assures us that God is a spiritual substance.³⁴ Indeed, "all spirits are hypothetical, except the infinite spirit, the father of spirits, the supreme Being."³⁵ (One wonders how God can be "the father of spirits" if he is the only real spirit.) Bolingbroke's metaphysical system, therefore, is essentially materialistic, God being a kind of external spirit, who is not very closely concerned with the materialistic world He has created. Inasmuch as God used infinite power in creating this world, there is no reason, he agrees with Locke and Collins, why He cannot have added the ability to think to certain systems of matter. True,

as long as matter is senseless and inert, it is not thinking substance, nor ought to be called so. But when, in any system of it, the essential properties, extension, solidity, &c. are maintained, that system is material still, though become a sensitive plant, a reasoning elephant, or a refining metaphysician. It would be non-

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sense to assert, what no man does assert, that the idea of incogitativity can be the idea of thinking; but it is nonsense, and something worse than nonsense, to assert what you assert, that God cannot give the faculty of thinking, a faculty in the principle of it entirely unknown to you, to systems of matter whose essential properties are solidity, extension, &c. not incogitativity . . . Our ideas of solidity and extension do not include the idea of thought, neither do they include that of motion; but they exclude neither: and the arguments you draw from the divisibility of matter against its cogitability, which you deny, might be not ill employed against its mobility which you admit, as I suppose.³⁶

As he indicates in a footnote (V, 514), Bolingbroke is specifically attacking Wollaston's conception of the soul and its immortality, Wollaston in turn having attacked Locke's famous statement that a power of thinking can be added to matter. Wollaston's chief argument is virtually the same as that which Clarke had used in his *Letter to Mr. Dodwell*. Bolingbroke, therefore, is assuming much the same position in regard to Wollaston as Collins had taken in regard to Clarke, and Bolingbroke's arguments resemble Collins' about as closely as Wollaston's resembles Clarke's. For Bolingbroke, as for Collins, thinking is a faculty acquired by matter, in much the same way as motion is such a faculty. Since it is a faculty adhering to matter, there is no good reason for assuming that it will exist, or persist, after the dissolution of the matter.

Bolingbroke's attack on Wollaston is developed fur-

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ther in a long footnote.³⁷ Wollaston admits that the soul is

a limited being, or a being, which acts *under limitations*: these limitations at different times are *different*, its activity and faculties being more obstructed or clog'd at *one time* than *another*, and most of all in sleep, or a deliquium . . . the state of the soul in the body . . . may be considered as one *general* and *great limitation* . . .³⁸

But how, Bolingbroke wonders, can the noble, immaterial soul, that "by which we are made after the image of God" be clogged by that material substance by which we are allied to the beasts of the field, and made after the image of other animals"?³⁹

Wollaston continues with his theory, trying, I believe, to answer Locke's objection that thought cannot be considered the essence of soul because the soul does not always think, by asserting that the soul has a capacity of thinking even when it is prevented from actualizing that capacity by the body. When a man wakes up from a sound sleep, for example, he is conscious that he has not been thinking, but he is also conscious that he retained the capacity of thinking, even though he was not exercising it:

From hence then I gather, that the soul *preserves* a capacity of thinking, &c. under those circumstances and indispositions of the body, in which it thinks *no more*, than if the body was *destroyd*; and that therefore it may, and will preserve it, when the body is *destroyd*.⁴⁰

Bolingbroke objects to the reasoning by which Wollaston has reached his conclusion. First, Wollaston rea-

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sons on the basis of the phenomena that the soul retains the capacity of thinking through sleep and various indispositions of the body. So far Bolingbroke can follow him. But then Wollaston jumps to his conclusion, merely assuming that, therefore, the soul's capacity of thinking survives the death of the body. This assumption he makes without a modicum of evidence and even with a strong presumption based on the phenomena against him. Bolingbroke proceeds to reduce Wollaston's argument to an absurdity:

Whilst we are alive we preserve the capacity of thinking, I should rather call it the faculty; just as we preserve the faculty of moving and other faculties plainly corporeal, subject alike to many impediments and many infirmities of the body in which the faculty of thinking has the largest share, as it might be shewn in various instances, in that of madness particularly. When we are dead, all these faculties are dead with us; and the sole difference that we make in our judgments of the one and the other arises from hence, that we imagine the capacity or faculty of thinking to belong to a substance distinct from the body, concerning which the phaenomena can shew us nothing after death; and concerning which by consequence metaphysicians and divines think themselves at liberty to say whatever they please. You would smile, if you heard any one say, that the man who has preserved the faculty of walking, after having lost and recovered frequently the use of his legs, will for this reason walk eternally. But you hearken very gravely when you hear another say, on as little knowledge,

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that he will think eternally; because he has preserved the capacity of thinking, after losing it in the whole or in part on so many occasions.⁴¹

But even if we assume that the soul is of such a nature that it must be associated with some body, it does not follow that the soul is necessarily mortal, Wollaston's argument proceeds. "For that *body*, which is so necessary to it, may be some *fine vehicle*, that dwells with it in the brain . . . and goes off with it at death."⁴² This fine, subtle body may reside in the brain, whence it is presented with stimuli from the outside world through the nerves and spirits of the various senses. The sense data it uses as the raw materials of thinking. Therefore, when the body is ill or asleep and the senses are not functioning, the soul thinks improperly or ceases to think. When the body dies, however, the impediments to the soul's thinking which prevented its thought during sleep are removed, and the soul is free to perceive directly and to think eternally:

When it shall in its *proper* vehicle be let go, and take its flight into the open fields of heaven, it will then be bare to the *immediate* impressions of objects: and why should not those impressions, which affected the *nerves* that moved and affected the vehicle and soul in it, affect the vehicle immediately . . .? . . . And then, this being so, why should we not presage, that *other indowments*, as faculties of reasoning, communicating thoughts, and the like, will be proportionable to such noble opportunities of knowledge? There seems to be nothing in this account impossible; and therefore nothing, but what *may be*.

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If we do but attend, we must see every where, that many things are by ways, which we *do not* nor *can* understand . . .⁴³

Again Bolingbroke ridicules Wollaston's theory, recognizing its Platonic origin:⁴⁴

He retails to his readers an old trite chimera of Platonic philosophy . . . He assumes, that the soul has another body besides this which perishes. . . This innermost body, which may be compared to the shirt of the soul, receives impressions from the outward body, which may be compared to it's great coat; and as those impressions of sensible objects are communicated to the shirt, so the shirt communicates them to the soul, who sits enveloped in it in the brain. . . When the great coat is worn out, or destroyed by any accident, the soul flies in it's shirt away into the open fields of heaven, and thus undressed as it were, the impressions that were made mediately by the nerves are made immediately on it: thus it becomes "as it were, all eye to visible objects, and all ear to audible, and so on."⁴⁵

Bolingbroke has, however, more serious criticism of Wollaston's procedure. He says that it is inconsistent for him to deny categorically that the capacity of thinking can be added to a system of matter and then to say "that many things are by ways, which we *do not* nor *can* understand."

We have seen that, in general, Bolingbroke's doctrine of immortality resembles Collins' rather than that of the moderate deists. I have not mentioned, however, the most striking resemblance. Bolingbroke follows Collins in suggesting that those who say that all beings that

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think are immaterial, indivisible, and, therefore, immortal are forced to contend with the objection of the plain man that, consequently, "other animals besides men have immaterial and immortal souls."⁴⁶ Bolingbroke says there are three answers to this objection—Collins, you remember, had suggested only two.⁴⁷ First, you may accept the solipsist position, that only the individual self and his ideas exist, that therefore, animals do not exist. Secondly, you may follow Descartes and reduce animals "to the state of automates or machines."⁴⁸ Thirdly, you may agree with Aristotle that only man has a rational soul, that other animals have merely sensitive souls.⁴⁹ Bolingbroke could have got only the second of these possibilities from Collins, but the general objection to immortality he may well have found in *A Letter to the Learned Mr. Henry Dodwell*.

If immortality cannot be proved by the moral argument used by the divines to vindicate God's justice and it cannot be proved by any of the metaphysical arguments advanced by Wollaston and others, is it possible to prove the doctrine at all? Bolingbroke agrees with Charron that it is "a doctrine the most usefully believed and the most weakly proved."⁵⁰ It is a doctrine, in short, which can not be proved by reason, any more than it can be denied by it. Nevertheless, pragmatically it is, as Charron says, a useful doctrine to believe in; for its corollary, that the future state is one of equitable rewards to the virtuous and punishments to the wicked, is a valuable sanction "to encourage virtue and to restrain vice":

Reason will neither deny, nor affirm, that there is to be a future state: and the doctrine of rewards and punishments in it has so great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to re-

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strain the vices of men, that reason, who cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it, on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine rest on the authority of revelation, a theist, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general.⁵¹

This passage is revealing of Bolingbroke's real position. The doctrine of immortality and its corollary, future rewards and punishments, cannot be proved rationally. A right-thinking man would be expected, therefore, to disbelieve in it himself and to encourage others to examine it rationally. But, Bolingbroke reminds us, neither can the doctrine be disproved rationally, and, therefore, the rational man is not obliged to deny it. In a situation like this, the wise thing to do is to determine the pragmatic consequences of holding such a doctrine to be true. The chief consequences, Bolingbroke thinks, are valuable ones—enforcement of civil laws, restraint on vice, and encouragement of virtue. If people think their actions will be judged in the future and that they will be rewarded and punished in a perfectly equitable manner, they are likely to behave better than if they think this life ends all. Consequently, Bolingbroke shrewdly suggests letting the doctrine stand on the authority of revelation. Even a deist, especially one who, like Bolingbroke, is also a pragmatist, should have no objection to the general doctrine.

Though Bolingbroke has said that immortality cannot be demonstrated, and though he seems to deny that the soul will survive the body, going so far as to say that the plain man "might add that, revelation a- part, . . . all the phaenomena from our birth to our death seem repugnant to the immateriality and the immor-

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talities of the soul,"⁵² he resents the Epicureans', ancient and modern, boasting of "their pretended certainty that the body and the soul die together."⁵³ He even on this occasion, wonders if certain mortality would be a very comfortable prospect, and says if he were given the choice of mortality or immortality, he would have no difficulty choosing the latter.

Following Locke's theory and Collins' defense of it, Bolingbroke has devoted much effort towards denying that the soul is necessarily immaterial. Indeed, he would define the soul as "a faculty superadded to the human corporeal system."⁵⁴ But he agrees with Collins that even if the soul could be proved immaterial, it would not follow that it was necessarily immortal. In fact, he says, the early Christians who believed the soul immortal thought of it as material. Then when the Platonic philosophy was introduced into Christianity, the soul became officially immaterial. And now we have been taught that the soul is both immortal and immaterial for so long that the two concepts have become so closely associated with each other that we are likely to think that one presupposes the other. Christian and Platonic philosophers have actually prejudiced the case for the immortality of the soul by insisting on its immateriality, for they are building "on a principle which they can never make intelligible."⁵⁵ It would be far more intelligible and would serve the purposes of religion as well (that is, it would allow the valuable sanction of future rewards and punishments) to say that the soul "is immortal by the good pleasure of God, tho material."⁵⁶ Bolingbroke shrewdly calls on the great champion of immortality as authority for his theory, referring to a much neglected passage in the *Timaeus*, where it is suggested that souls, though material and,

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therefore, mortal by nature are "such as should never die."⁵⁷

Reason, Bolingbroke has shown, cannot prove or deny the doctrine of immortality, either by means of the moral argument from God's justice or the metaphysical argument from the immateriality of the soul. What evidence of its validity, then, can history—both pagan and Biblical—provide? In general, Bolingbroke's exposition of the history of the doctrine follows that to be found in Toland's "The History of the Soul's Immortality among the Heathens."⁵⁸ The doctrine, Bolingbroke says, originated in Egypt,⁵⁹ where it "was strongly inculcated from time immemorial."⁶⁰ From Egypt it was taken to Greece, probably by Orpheus, and was given authority by the epics of Homer and later by the philosophy of Plato. From Greece it was taken to Rome, where it was again celebrated in epic poetry, this time by Virgil. In short, it was a doctrine considered so useful by every religion that it was "incorporated into all the systems of paganism,"⁶¹ but it was not adopted by the Jews, though they may have had some intimation of the doctrine from their neighbors.⁶² Why Bolingbroke wonders, since it was such an expedient doctrine, had not Moses, who undoubtedly knew the doctrine as he had been brought up at court, taught it to them? Surely, such a doctrine would have added weight to his laws and have helped him keep the Israelites in awe. And certainly it would have been readily believed by a people so superstitious as they.⁶³

In trying to answer this question Bolingbroke enters the periphery of the controversy over the divinity of the Mosaic laws and government in which Warburton was playing so important a part with his *Divine Legation of Moses*:

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The deists had made use of the argument that there is no clear mention in the Old Testament of a belief in immortality. Orthodox writers who replied to them were in the awkward position of having to strain the interpretation of the texts and to use other questionable arguments in their attempt to prove that the doctrine of a future state was familiar to the Jews.⁶⁴

Then Warburton accepted the deistic premise and concluded therefrom that the law of Moses is divine. In general, his argument is as follows: A belief in a future state of rewards and punishments is essential to the welfare of a civil society, if that society is under a merely general—or as Warburton puts it, “a common or unequal”—Providence. In fact, the doctrine was taught by all ancient philosophers, whether they believed in it or not, on the basis of good policy. But “the doctrine of a future State of Rewards and Punishments is not to be found in, nor did make a Part of the Mosaic Dispensation.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the Mosaic dispensation must be divine: “the Jews must really have enjoyed that equal Providence (particular Providence) under which holy Scripture represents them to have lived.”⁶⁶

Although Warburton is interested primarily in proving the divinity of the Mosaic legislation rather than in explaining why Moses did not teach the doctrine of a future state, his answer to that question is implicit in his main argument. Moses did not teach that doctrine because it would be unnecessary in a theocracy, a state which is governed by particular Providence. Such an answer, according to Bolingbroke is insufficient:

Shall we say, that an hypothesis of future rewards and punishments was useless among a

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people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who resided in the midst of them, and who dealt out rewards and punishments on every occasion? Why then were so many precautions taken? Why was a solemn covenant made with God, as with a temporal prince? Why were so many promises and threatenings of rewards and punishments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy, most pathetically held out by Moses?⁶⁷

What difference would it make, Bolingbroke continues, whether the rewards and punishments held out were in the immediate future or in the more distant and eternal future life? If rewards and punishments of a future state were unnecessary because God was right there among them, surely temporal rewards and punishments, even though in the near future, would also be unnecessary. No, there is another and more important reason for withholding the doctrine in question; this reason can be understood only if we are to some extent familiar with the nature of the Egyptian religion. The Egyptians were a sophisticated people who had, in effect, two systems of religion—one outward, the other inward. The inward religion, which Bolingbroke calls natural religion, was known only to the élite, among whom probably was Moses, as the adopted son of the princess. One of the secret doctrines of this inward religion was undoubtedly that of the immortality of the soul. The outward religion, on the other hand, consisted largely of superstition, idolatry, and magic. As the children of Israel knew only this outward religion, they could not have known the real doctrine of a future

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state, but they did know the superstitious idolatrous rites and ceremonies with which it was associated.

It would have been hard, therefore, to teach, or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Israelites, without giving them an occasion the more to recall the polytheistical fables, and practice the idolatrous rites they had learned during their captivity.⁶⁸

Teaching the doctrine would have necessitated in the minds of the Jews teaching the rite, which Moses desired at all costs to avoid.

Though Bolingbroke is attacking Warburton's main thesis in *The Divine Legation*⁶⁹ (perhaps by implication he is denying that the government instituted by Moses is a theocracy), nevertheless, he probably found the germ of his own solution to the problem of why Moses avoided teaching immortality to the Jews in that very book. Such a passage as the following may well have given him the clue:

*The Jewish People were extremely fond of Egyptian Manners, and did frequently fall into Egyptian Superstitions, . . . [and] many of the Laws given to them by the Ministry of Moses were instituted partly in Compliance to their Prejudices, and partly in Opposition to those Superstitions . . .*⁷⁰

Thus, according to Bolingbroke, the validity of the doctrine of immortality and future rewards and punishments can be demonstrated neither by reason nor by ancient pagan or Biblican history. Though the doctrine was taught by all the great pagan philosophers, they probably taught it not because they believed it but because they thought it good policy. We likewise should recognize that "tho it has no foundation in

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scripture or reason, and is purely imaginary,"⁷¹ that it may have considerable value pragmatically.

In the last analysis, Bolingbroke recommends resignation to the will of God. Mortality, after all, is no indignity, for "it is common to all the animal kind" that we should go back to the dust from whence we sprung. He who complains of a common fate with other animals "does not seem to have been set, by his reasoning faculties, so far above them in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them in death." If the hypothesis of mortality were true, which Bolingbroke confesses himself far from assuming, "I should have no reason to complain, tho having tasted existence, I might abhor non-entity." Let me

take refuge in resignation at the last as in every other act of my life. Let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten, or flatter themselves as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay a lowering day, or a clear sunshine shall inspire them to do. Let the tranquillity of my mind rest on this immoveable rock, that my future, as well as my present state are ordered by an Almighty and Allwise Creator; and that they are equally foolish, and presumptuous, who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present.⁷²

¹ Clarke, *Evidences* . . . , pp. 25-6.

² Edward Herbert of Cherbury, *De veritate* (Bristol, England, 1937), p. 300; Charles Blount, *Religio laici*, p. 71.

³ John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, 1894), II, 192ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 194-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 195.

⁷ Samuel Clarke, *Works* (London, 1738), III, 721.

⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 723.

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- ⁹ All of these pamphlets are reprinted in Clarke, *Works*, III, 721ff
- ¹⁰ Anthony Collins, "A Letter to the Learned Mr. Henry Dodwell," Clarke's *Works*, III, 750.
- ¹¹ See footnote above
- ¹² Anthony Collins, *op. cit.*, III, 751.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, III, 752
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 752.
- ¹⁵ The substance of Collins' argument is to be found succinctly stated in his first attack on Clarke, "A Letter to the Learned Mr. Henry Dodwell."
- ¹⁶ Collins, *op. cit.*, III, 752-3.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 753.
- ¹⁸ Tindal, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- ¹⁹ Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 394.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 164ff.
- ²¹ Bolingbroke, V, 543.
- ²² *Ibid.*, V, 487-8.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, V, 323, 355-6, 364, 378, 394-5; 487ff., 491, 542. Warburton says of this league between atheists and divines (*View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy*, p. 19): "Well then, the whole of this chimerical confederacy comes to this, That Divines and Atheists hold a principle in common; but in common too with all the rest of mankind; namely, that there are irregularities in the distribution of moral good and evil."
- ²⁴ Bolingbroke, V, 542.
- ²⁵ Though he usually thinks of immortality and a future state of rewards and punishments as the same doctrine, he at times distinguishes between them; for he says (V, 500) that immortality does not necessarily presuppose a future state of rewards and punishments, whereas a future state, or an eternity, of rewards and punishments does presuppose immortality.
- ²⁶ Bolingbroke, V, 500.
- ²⁷ For Bolingbroke's discussion of substance see III, 499ff.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 504.
- ²⁹ Bolingbroke adds solidity to Descartes' description of the essence of body
- ³⁰ Bolingbroke, III, 508.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, III, 509-10.
- ³² *Ibid.*, III, 510.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, III, 511.
- ³⁴ Bolingbroke is fearful of being thought a Spinozist. He says (III, 504) that it is possible to be a materialist "without admitting the principle of Spinoza in it's full extent; without supposing God a material being, from whence the most absurd consequences would follow."
- ³⁵ Bolingbroke, III, 427.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 518-19.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 514ff.

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- 38 Wollaston, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
- 39 Bolingbroke, III, 515.
- 40 Wollaston, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
- 41 Bolingbroke, III, 516-17.
- 42 Wollaston, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 199.
- 44 The source of Bolingbroke's ridiculous figure is undoubtedly the *Phaedo*, in which Plato compares the soul to a tailor.
- 45 Bolingbroke, III, 517.
- 46 *Ibid.*, III, 528.
- 47 See p. 117 above.
- 48 Bolingbroke, III, 528.
- 49 *Ibid.*, IV, 350.
- 50 *Ibid.*, IV, 350.
- 51 *Ibid.*, V, 322; see also V, 351, 364-5.
- 52 *Ibid.*, III, 557.
- 53 *Ibid.*, V, 492.
- 54 *Ibid.*, III, 517.
- 55 *Ibid.*, III, 535.
- 56 *Ibid.*, III, 559.
- 57 *Ibid.*, III, 559.
- 58 This tract is published as "Letter II" of Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704), pp. 19ff.
- 59 Warburton implies (*Divine Legation of Moses*, London, 1738-41, I, xlvii) that the free thinkers are always going back to the Egyptians.
- 60 Bolingbroke, V, 238.
- 61 *Ibid.*, V, 238.
- 62 *Ibid.*, V, 353.
- 63 *Ibid.*, V, 239.
- 64 A. W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians* (Oxford, 1932), pp. 52-3.
- 65 Warburton, *op. cit.*, II, 677.
- 66 *Ibid.*, II, 452.
- 67 Bolingbroke, V, 239.
- 68 *Ibid.*, V, 241; see also IV, 470.
- 69 For Bolingbroke's reading of Warburton see the appendix.
- 70 Warburton, *op. cit.*, II, 297.
- 71 Bolingbroke, V, 493.
- 72 *Ibid.*, V, 391-2

CHAPTER VI

Reason and the Religion of Nature

ALL OF the aspects of Bolingbroke's deism discussed so far have been directly related to his conception of God. After using the teleological argument to prove God's existence, Bolingbroke postulates the natural attributes of power and wisdom, which he considers manifest in God's works. God, being infinitely powerful and wise, created a world so perfect that it does not need His further intercession by miracles to adjust its course. In fact, we can infer from God's attributes that it is the best of possible worlds, a world in which evil is a mere appearance from the myopic human point of view. Since this world is the best possible, it is unnecessary to postulate a future better world where rewards and punishments are more equitably distributed.

Not all of Bolingbroke's deism, however, is so closely related to God. Reason, for example, though it is "the candle of the Lord" and God's special gift to man, is essentially a human faculty. When we discuss it, our emphasis shifts from God to man.

The deists had a special conception of reason, characterized, according to Lovejoy, by the principle of uniformity:

The reason, it is assumed to be evident, is identical in all men; and the life of reason therefore, it is tacitly or explicitly inferred, must

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admit of no diversity. Differences in opinion or in taste are evidences of error; and universality of appeal or of acceptance tends to be taken, not merely as an effect, but as in itself a mark or criterion, of truth. Anything of which the intelligibility, verifiability, or actual affirmation is limited to men of a special age, race, temperament, tradition, or condition is *eo ipso* without truth or value, or at all events without importance to a reasonable man.¹

Assuming the uniformity of human reason, there are two ways of determining truth. One can rely on the individual reason or one can refer to the *consensus gentium*. The infallibility of the individual reason really is to be inferred from the principle of uniformity. If every rational individual, as a rational being, is like every other, and reason is the only instrument for determining truth, then each individual reason must be an infallible guide to truth. Since all men normally have the same infallible reason, another certain way of judging truth would be to take a poll of human opinion, to appeal to the *consensus gentium*. A common corollary of the uniformitarian conception of reason is what Lovejoy calls "intellectual equalitarianism." As all men have within them infallible lights of reason, one man as a thinking being is potentially as good as another. Consequently, no important belief or doctrine can be beyond the plain man's comprehension. Related to this tendency is the deist's anti-intellectualism, which I shall discuss in a later chapter. Inasmuch as the significant conceptions and beliefs are all discoverable by common men, esoteric and intricate reasonings are unimportant, if not untrue. Another corollary of the deistic conception of reason is a kind of

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"rationalistic primitivism." Since the truths of nature are universally intelligible to all men, these truths must have been known to primitive men. In fact, it is likely that unsophisticated men comprehend them more clearly than modern men whose reasons have been trammelled by needless disputation and elaboration.

The complex of ideas described above is accepted explicitly or implicitly by most of the deists, and it permeates much of their thinking about natural religion, the law of nature, ethics, and most of their negative doctrines.

Herbert of Cherbury bases his common notions of religion on the principle of uniformity, appealing to the *consensus gentium* for a verification of their validity. The common notions, he says, are "not what a large number of men assert, but what all men of normal mind believe";² they are "what has been universally accepted by every religion, age and country."³ Herbert's follower, Charles Blount, besides affirming Herbert's method of deriving the common notions, emphasizes the infallibility of reason, which is "full of its own light shining always in us."⁴ Toland stresses the uniformity of the individual reason: *Reason*, I say, . . . is whole and entire in every one whose Organs are not accidentally indisposed."⁵ He also uses the terms "light of reason" and "sound reason" to emphasize reason's infallibility.⁶ He expresses, in addition, the democratic test of the validity of doctrines in Christianity: "The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their [the common people's] Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not."⁷ In short, Toland says, "Sound Reason, or the light of common sense, is a catholic and eternal rule, without

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which mankind cou'd not subsist in peace or happiness one hour."⁸

Even so orthodox a man as William Wollaston defines reason in the same manner as the deists: "*Reason* is something universal, a kind of general instrument, applicable to particular things and cases as they occur."⁹ Tindal speaks of "the Universality of a Law . . . as the only Mark of its coming from the Governor of Mankind,"¹⁰ the implication being that the law of reason, as it is universal or uniform, is of divine origin. He says further that "there's a *Law of Nature*, or *Reason*; which is so call'd as being a Law which is common, or natural to all rational Creatures; and that this Law like its Author, is absolutely perfect, eternal and unchangeable."¹¹ Annet considers reasoning a God-given¹²

Power *perfect* in itself in the smallest Degree and if rightly exercis'd, capable of directing to necessary Truth: But Men's not acting *perfectly* conformable to it, does not destroy the *Perfection* of its Nature. I say *Reason is perfect in its Nature, in the smallest Degree*, as the smallest Spark is perfect Fire; so the Power of Reasoning, though ever so weak, is true Power so far as it is a Power . . .¹³

Annet goes on to make clear that he knows reason can be misused, and that man is a fallible being.¹⁴

Strangely enough, Bolingbroke, generally the most optimistic of deists, has less confidence in reason, *qua* reason, than any of those quoted above, even than Annet who admits reason may be fallible. Only occasionally when he is speaking specifically of reason, does he suggest its infallibility:

There is such a thing as natural reason, implanted in us by the author of our nature,

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whose progress and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire, not only moral, but every other human science.¹⁵

He also does use the characteristic deistic terms, such as "right reason," "sound reason" and "light of nature,"¹⁶ and he shows a tendency towards "intellectual equalitarianism" by appealing to common sense and the testimony of the plain man,¹⁷ the man who is uncorrupted by frills or rational subtleties. But usually when he is talking directly about reason, he emphasizes its fallibility rather than its infallibility. At times he seems to consider all reason, even that of the normal, uncorrupted mind highly fallible. In the following passage, for example, he seems to contradict not only the uniformitarian conception of reason but also his own optimistic view of the world:

Reason not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to those who possess the greatest share, our wisdom, and our happiness are very imperfect likewise, and the state of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect state.¹⁸

It is difficult to know exactly what Bolingbroke's meaning is in this passage. If he had said instead of *given to* "not being operative in all alike," it would be clear that he intended to emphasize the difference between the potentiality of human reason and its actual powers. Perhaps this distinction is in the back of his mind. Or perhaps he is thinking specifically of *a priori* reasoning and the confusion resulting from the use of that method. In another passage in which he similarly disparages reason that seems to be his meaning. In this passage Bol-

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ingbroke is talking about the law of nature, which, he says,

is plain, but the precepts it contains are general. Reason collects them easily from the whole system of God's works, from the constitution of human nature, the consequences of human actions, and the invariable course of things. But then to make the greatest part of these general precepts as useful to human kind as the divine lawgiver intended them to be, reason has a further task assigned her. Reason must be employed to make proper, and necessary, deductions from these precepts, and to apply them in every case that concerns our duty to God and man . . .

Now human reason being at best as fallible as it is, and having been as little informed by experience as it was in the early ages, when mankind began to gather into political societies, a multitude of false deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made; for nothing can be more true than this observation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common notions to particulars, is one great cause of the errors, and misfortunes of mankind.¹⁹

Reason, Bolingbroke says, easily discovers the law of nature from God's works, for then it is proceeding *a posteriori*, from particular to general. But when reason has to make *deductions* from the general precepts of the law of nature, it soon goes astray, because in making deductions it is proceeding *a priori*, from general to particular. In the second paragraph above, Bolingbroke says more explicitly that *a priori* reasoning is especially

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fallible. Nevertheless, how can we account for his saying that the human reason is at best fallible? Surely the human reason at best must mean the human reason working *a posteriori*. He seems to explain this by suggesting that man's reason has been corrupted by frequently reasoning *a priori* in past ages. The sins of the ancestral reason are to be visited on its descendents.

To be an effective instrument reason must, therefore, be well trained by constant reasonings *a posteriori*. Bolingbroke expresses this idea figuratively as follows:

It happens to reason as it happens to instruments ill tuned. The strings are left sometimes too lax, and are sometimes wound up too high. In one case, they give no sound at all, or one that is lifeless and heavy. In the other, the noise they make is great, it fills the ear, but it carries no true harmony to the soul. By the first we may allude to reason weak and unimproved, by the second to reason strained into all the abstractions of metaphysics, and we may discern good sense between these extremes, that is reason at it's proper tone.²⁰

Thus reason at its *proper tone* is reason empirically trained and uncorrupted by metaphysical subtleties.

But reason at its proper tone, however praised it may be by Bolingbroke, is seldom used by him. He reasons more often in the manner of the divines he so despises than in the manner of the empiricists he would emulate. It is true he emphasizes the most nearly empirical argument for God's existence; but as soon as he thinks he has established God's existence *a posteriori*, he reasons *a priori* from His attributes to a theory of Providence which denies particular interpositions and, consequently, miracles. Then he reasons from His wis-

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dom to an optimistic theory of the perfection of the world. Later we shall see him using the same *a priori* method to establish his ethical theory.

The characteristic doctrine which the deists derive directly from their conception of reason is natural religion. For Herbert natural religion consists of the five common notions, which he considers universally accepted by rational men: (1) God exists; (2) God must be worshipped; (3) virtue is the most important part of religious practice; (4) vices and crimes must be expiated by repentance; (5) there is a future state of rewards and punishments.²¹ Blount's conception of natural religion is virtually the same as Herbert's. He writes:

Natural Religion is the Belief we have of an eternal intellectual Being, and of the Duty which we owe him, manifested to us by our Reason, without Revelation or positive Law . . .²²

To Herbert's five common notions he adds two more, which really are subdivisions of (1) and (2) above, that God governs the world by providence, and that He should be worshipped by prayer and praise.

Toland does not specifically discuss natural religion, though he does accept at least two of Herbert's common notions—the existence of God and belief in immortality. Tindal gives the traditional definition of natural religion:

By *Natural Religion* I understand the Belief of the Existence of a God, and the Sense and Practice of those Duties which result from the Knowledge we, by our Reason, have of him and his Perfections; and of ourselves and our own Imperfections; and of the relation we

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stand in to him and our Fellow-Creatures . . .²³

Tindal more than any earlier deist emphasizes the importance of morality to true, or natural, religion. "I think," he says, "we may define True Religion to consist in a constant Disposition of Mind to do all the Good we can."²⁴ Following the principle of uniformity, he stresses also the simplicity of true religion: "In short, True Religion can't but be plain, simple, and natural, as resign'd for all Mankind, adapted to every Capacity, and suited to every Condition and Circumstance of Life . . ."²⁵ In fact, he implies, natural religion can be considered the original revelation.²⁶ As the title of his book *The Moral Philosopher*, indicates, Morgan agrees with Tindal that the moral content of natural religion is of great importance:

When this universal immutable Wisdom, Reason or Moral Truth, is follow'd and complied with, as the Will and Law of God the supreme Being, . . . it then constitutes what we call the Religion of Nature, which is every where and at all Times the same, as much as God himself.²⁷ . . . The original, true Religion, therefore, of God and Nature consisted in the direct, immediate Worship of the one true God, by an absolute Resignation to, and Dependence on him in the Practice of all the Duties and Obligations of moral truth and Righteousness.²⁸

The last phrase Morgan repeats frequently. Annet gives a characteristic description of natural religion: "True Religion is all of a Piece: It is plain and true throughout, and cannot deceive, being founded on the Reason and nature of Things . . ."²⁹

Bolingbroke defines natural religion, in a traditionally

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deistic manner as "the religion of reasonable nature" which is "obligatory on all who had such a nature on their side."³⁰ Following Tindal, he also defines it as "that original revelation which God has made of himself, and of his will to all mankind, in the constitution of things, and in the order of his providence."³¹ Moreover, he describes natural religion, consistently with the principle of uniformity, as discoverable to every rational man. Each man receives it on his own authority, not on any external and unknown authority. This original revelation, furthermore, "is a perpetual, a standing revelation, always made, always making, and as present in these days, as in the days of Adam, to all his off-spring."³² Since it is a perpetual revelation to all men,

the religion of nature, and therefore of the God of nature is [necessarily] simple and plain; it tells us nothing which our reason is unable to comprehend, and much less anything which is repugnant to it. Natural religion and reason are always agreed, they are always the same, and the whole economy of God's dispensations to man is of a piece.³³

Thus, natural religion can be discovered by reason; about this fact, Bolingbroke thinks, there can be no argument:

All the truths of natural religion are discoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due use of reason alone; and God has left them to be so discovered: for tho' he has not given the same capacity to all men in any case, he has given the same means to all men in this case. If natural religion is discoverable by all men, revealed religion is so by none . . .³⁴

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Again Bolingbroke emphasizes that reason must be used *a posteriori*, not *a priori*. We must be content with discovering what of religion is revealed to us in God's works; for God has revealed to us there all that he considers it necessary for us to know of religion.³⁵ Fortunately, man has a new discipline, dedicated to this very principle of reasoning, which can help him discover the truths of the religion of nature. Science, as a result of careful observation of the phenomena of nature, has developed various techniques and inventions which enable man to find revealed in God's works more clearly than ever the true religion, the religion of nature. Indeed, "the true foundations of natural theology must be laid in natural philosophy."³⁶ Moreover, our knowledge of natural religion, like our knowledge of natural philosophy, is real—intuitive in Locke's sense of the term.³⁷

What are the principles, the precepts, of natural religion which we know so positively? First of all, we know that God, the self-existent first cause of the world, whose attributes are infinite power and wisdom, exists.³⁸ We know this not as the innate idea Herbert would have it be, but from God's works. The second of Herbert's universal notions, that it is our duty to worship God, Bolingbroke never emphasizes, though he does say that natural religion teaches us "to acknowledge and adore the infinite wisdom and power of God."³⁹ The third of Herbert's notions, that morality is the most important part of religious practice, Bolingbroke stresses almost as much as Morgan. He says that

the religion of nature teaches, that morality is our greatest interest, because it tends to the greatest happiness of our whole kind in this life, and our greatest duty, because it is made

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such by the will of that Supreme Being who created us, and the system to which we belong.⁴⁰

More specifically, natural religion teaches men to be benevolent, just and truthful.⁴¹ Benevolence Bolingbroke calls the fundamental principle of natural religion."⁴² This statement seems to be inconsistent with Bolingbroke's denial of the moral attributes, for there is no room for benevolence in a religion which denies the goodness of God. I suppose Bolingbroke would answer such an objection by saying that he did not deny that God is in some sense good; he denied only that God is good in the human sense of the word. Or he might repeat his rather obscure statement that God's goodness is absorbed in His wisdom, and so benevolence is to be inferred from God's wisdom. The fourth of Herbert's common notions, that vices and crimes must be atoned for by repentance Bolingbroke also accepts.⁴³ The last of the notions, that there is a future state of perfectly equitable rewards and punishments, we have seen him question,⁴⁴ though he is loath to deny it on the grounds of good policy.

Thus, Bolingbroke limits the five precepts of natural religion which Herbert had formulated to four, only two of which—that God exists and that morality is the most important part of religion—he considers of great importance. Bolingbroke, unlike Herbert, is not content to postulate a series of religious principles which he thinks all men accept and which can be considered innate ideas. As a follower of Locke he denies the existence of innate principles and feels that he must establish the precepts of natural religion inductively. The existence of God he has established in that manner by means of the teleological argument. Whether or not

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he established his ethical principles *a posteriori* is a problem for the next chapter of this book.

One reason why Bolingbroke disapproves of traditional or institutional religions is that they do not sufficiently emphasize the importance of morality. They all lay such stress on "external rites, ceremonies, and positive duties, that have no relation to those of the moral kind" that they forget to teach a man how to be good. In fact, they make it very difficult for him to be both good and devout.⁴⁵ As an example of a people who insist upon the ceremonial to the exclusion of the moral he mentions the Jews:

No nation so exact in observing fasts and feasts, and so superstitiously zealous in the practice of every ceremony of a law that abounded with ceremonies. But no nation so inhospitable at the same time, no people so uncharitable, nor so absolutely strangers to that fundamental principle of natural religion, universal benevolence.⁴⁶

Natural religion, however, unlike all institutional religions, is so perfect relatively to God and the system he has instituted that man by the use of right reason can discover all his duties to God and to his fellow man. So long as the system of the world, including man and his relationship to God, remains the same, the religion of nature and its precepts cannot change:

If it does not follow necessarily from hence, sure I am it follows probably, that God has made no other revelation of himself, and of his will to mankind. I do not assert that he has made no such particular revelations, as I did not presume to assert that there are never any particular interpositions of his prov-

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idence: but this I will assert, that if he has made any such, the original and universal revelation must be the foundation, and the criterion of them all.⁴⁷

Natural religion, thus, is normative; all institutional religions are dependent on "and should be made subservient to it."⁴⁸ If, therefore, a conflict between an alleged revelation and natural religion arises, the latter must prevail.

The simple moral religion taught by Jesus is much to be commended, for it approximates the norm of natural religion:

The system of religion, which Christ published, and his evangelists recorded, is a complete system to all the purposes of true religion, natural and revealed. It contains all the duties of the former.⁴⁹

Indeed, "no system can be more simple and plain than this of natural religion as it stands in the gospel."⁵⁰ If only the propagators of the religion of Christ had been content to teach the moral duties of the natural religion which their master re-established, they might have preserved the true religion in all its pristine purity and simplicity. But instead they perplexed and corrupted it by rites, ceremonies, and needless doctrines.⁵¹ There could be no greater contrast, for example, than that between Christianity as taught by Christ and as taught by Paul.⁵² Later theologians have grafted onto and confused the original Christianity to such an extent that if Christ were to return to earth, he would find the world in a state of darkness and error comparable to that which existed before he came; and he would doubtless be shocked to see how far the religion he had

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established had transgressed from its original and genuine purity.

The religion taught by Jesus is not the only historical religion approximating natural religion. The principle of uniformity leads Bolingbroke to search for evidence of natural religion in antiquity.⁵³ He finds it, he thinks, in the early history of China. During the time of the first two imperial families, a period of some eleven hundred years which Bolingbroke describes as a golden age, "natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed" than it has been in any other country or age. In this period it was considered unlawful to dispute about the nature, the attributes and the providence of God. And the utterances of their wise men indicate that it was from the order of nature they inferred "all the rules of private morality and public policy." They developed *a posteriori* three kinds of moral duties—those of the individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of the state. In short, these ancient Chinese seem to have enjoyed "all the blessings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying." But the reign of natural religion was not permanent in China, for during the dynasty of the third imperial family the seeds of artificial theology were planted. "The affectation of imagining and unfolding mysteries, and of explaining the first principle of all things, grew into fashion amongst them . . ." Soon natural religion was deformed by specious metaphysical speculation.⁵⁴

Bolingbroke also finds evidence of the teaching of natural religion in ancient Egypt; for he says, "There is reason to believe, that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practised in the ancient theban dynasty."⁵⁵ This fact, which he got from Plu-

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tarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, he uses as evidence against Locke's assertion that the true God was not known until the gospel announced him to the world.⁵⁶

But if the religion of nature, the perfect religion, can be—and, indeed, was in the case of China and Thebes—discovered by the light of reason alone, how is it such a religion has never prevailed for any great length of time, how is it that the heathens were unable to reform the manners and actions of men? Both Locke and Clarke raise this question. Clarke says:

'Tis certain the *Effect* of all the teaching and instruction even of the best of the Philosophers in the Heathen World, was in comparison very small and inconsiderable. They never were able to reform the World with any great and universal Success, nor to keep together any considerable number of Men in the knowledge and practise of true Virtue.⁵⁷

Locke suggests that even if we grant, which he does only for the sake of argument, "that all moral precepts of the gospel were known by somebody or other, amongst mankind before" the time of Jesus, still mankind had no complete and authoritative system of morality upon which he could depend.⁵⁸

Bolingbroke answers Clarke's arguments step by step. First, he refers to Clarke's allegation that natural religion was to the heathens a wide sea on which they wandered without a guide by saying, "They had better guides than Clarke, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reason."⁵⁹ But, says Clarke, "The *Number* of those, who have in earnest set themselves about this excellent Work, have been *exceedingly Few*."⁶⁰ Bolingbroke denies the number to have been few. "So-crates, his scholars, and all the great men whom the

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academy produced, may be reckoned a number of missionaries sufficient to preach the duties of natural religion, with full effect in such a city as Athens."⁶¹ The second reason Clarke brings for the failure of the heathens is that their actions were inconsistent with the precepts they taught. But this allegation, Bolingbroke contends, applies more certainly to Christian divines than to heathen philosophers, and Clarke thinks divines have been successful in reforming mankind.⁶² Then Bolingbroke groups together two of Clarke's arguments saying that one is inconsistent with the other. Interestingly enough—and this is evidence of the widespread respect for the principle of uniformity in the early eighteenth century—one of them is a complaint on Clarke's part that

most of their [the heathens'] Discourses upon these Subjects [of morality], have been rather speculative and learned, nice and subtle Disputes; than practical and universally useful Instructions.⁶³

Clarke regrets that Plato and other heathen philosophers have used

such abstract and subtle Reasonings, as the generality of Men had by no means either Abilities or Opportunities to understand or be duly affected by.⁶⁴

The other is an allegation of ignorance on the part of the heathens of "the whole Scheme, Order, and State of things."⁶⁵ Actually, Bolingbroke says, if these philosophers had attempted to explain the whole order of things, their reasoning would necessarily have been more abstract and subtle than ever. Furthermore, though it is true that a philosopher like Plato, for example, expresses a plethora of sublime doctrines and abstract

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arguments, many of these very doctrines and arguments were anticipations of Christian dogma. Some of the most important "precepts of christian morality" as well as some of the "most profound mysteries of christianity" were taught by Plato centuries before their revelation.⁶⁶ Think how unintelligible to the plain man Plato would have been if he had taught all of the sublime, abstract doctrines of Christianity!⁶⁷ Finally, Bolingbroke denies Clarke's last argument, that the heathen philosophers failed to reform mankind because their doctrines lacked the support of divine authority. But these philosophers at least claimed divine authority for their theories, and that divine authority was admitted by their contemporaries:

In short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or reformed religions and commonwealths, made these pretensions, and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors, but they passed in vulgar opinion for persons divinely inspired and commissioned.⁶⁸

Apparently, the only thing that matters, according to Bolingbroke is that the philosophers were thought to be divinely inspired.

Locke, as well as Clarke, confounds "the want of sufficient means to propagate, and want of sufficient means to know the religion of nature." But, worse than that, Locke asserts an untruth when he contrasts the perfect knowledge of the true natural religion revealed by the gospel with the imperfect knowledge attained by the heathens.⁶⁹ Locke alleges that Christ revealed a perfect ethical system in the gospel, "proved to be law of nature, from principles of reason, and teaching all the duties of life."⁷⁰ Bolingbroke admits that moral duties are

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occasionally commanded or recommended in the gospel, but denies that the gospel is any such code of ethics, or that it is established from principles of reason. Indeed, if all the recommended or commanded obligations were collected "and put together in the very words of the sacred writers, they would compose a very short, as well as unconnected system of ethics."⁷¹

A group of moral precepts collected from Cicero, Seneca and Epictetus, however, (Locke had suggested that a moral system collected from the various heathen philosophers would be far from complete) "would be more full, more entire, more coherent, and more clearly deduced from unquestionable principles of knowledge."⁷²

What, more specifically, is the difference between the moral precepts of the gospel and of heathen philosophers? Let us look, for example, at those expressed in Matthew, especially in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters where a sermon preached by Jesus Himself is transcribed. Unquestionably, the precepts recommended here are excellent, but they are merely repetitions of what natural religion enjoins, and what many philosophers have practiced. Take several precepts as examples. The law of nature and natural religion forbids adultery when the institution of marriage has been established. The gospel makes the same prohibition but goes farther, saying "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The religion of nature forbids murder; the gospel forbids even anger, which might lead to murder. The religion of nature encourages universal benevolence as the greatest of principles; the gospel strains that principle to the extent of exhorting us to love our enemies. Actually these sublime precepts, which are characteristic of Christianity, have never been precisely observed by Christians

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anywhere. Perhaps the reason for so exaggerating them, Bolingbroke suggests, is that "men will always stop short of that pitch of virtue which is proposed them, and it is therefore right to carry the notions of it as high as possible."⁷³

But since neither these inflated Christian precepts nor the precepts of the various pre-Christian philosophers have been able to reform mankind effectively, must we not conclude "that such a reformation is impracticable?"⁷⁴ Is it not likely that no means can effect this desired reformation? There is in man a perpetual conflict between his passions and his reason. "Just such a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind."⁷⁵ Nothing can be done to determine that conflict in favor of virtue, for it is part of the order of the world that it should be so.

Thus, Bolingbroke, like the other deists, derives his doctrine of natural religion from a conception of reason characterized primarily by its uniformity. Unlike most of the deists, however, he emphasizes the actual corruption and fallibility of human reason rather than its potential infallibility. He considers it so fallible that it has corrupted natural religion by specious distinctions and needless elaboration until it is necessary today, if one wants to discover an example of perfect natural religion, to study the early ages of mankind when uncorrupted right reason discovered the simple and plain duties towards God and man which God has revealed in His works. Real natural religion, therefore, is to be found in the early Chinese and Egyptian dynasties rather even than in the teachings of Christ. Those teachings, good as they are, show evidence of an elaboration and sophistication which is foreign to natural religion.

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Inasmuch as it is the simple obligations incumbent upon man which are revealed in God's works, the essential content of natural religion is moral. That is, natural religion is that religion which will teach man to be good rather than devout. Conversely, the truly religious man is the good man, the man whose actions are moral.

- ¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," *Modern Philology*, XXIX (1931-2), 282-3. I am much indebted to Professor Lovejoy's excellent analysis of the deistic conception of reason.
- ² Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 301.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 302.
- ⁴ Charles Blount, *The Oracles of Reason . . .* (London, 1693), pp. 92-3.
- ⁵ Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 57.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 140.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- ⁸ Toland, *Nazarenus* (London, 1718), pp. 65-6
- ⁹ Wollaston, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- ¹⁰ Tindal, *op., cit.*, p. 174.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ¹² Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ¹⁵ Bolingbroke, V, 74; see also V, 310.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 290; V, 95, 295, 566.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 73, 309; III, 424, 536, 556ff.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 151.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 154.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 447. Bolingbroke is fond of stating his ideas figuratively, though he criticises Plato, King, *et al.* for using the same method.
- ²¹ Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 291ff.
- ²² Charles Blount, *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 197.
- ²³ Tindal, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*; p. 176.

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- 27 Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- 29 Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
- 30 Bolingbroke, V, 295.
- 31 *Ibid.*, V, 543.
- 32 *Ibid.*, V, 92.
- 33 *Ibid.*, V, 259-60.
- 34 *Ibid.*, V, 294; see also IV, 315, 411.
- 35 *Ibid.*, V, 397.
- 36 *Ibid.*, IV, 255; see also V, 339, 565.
- 37 *Ibid.*, IV, 276-7.
- 38 See especially *Ibid.*, V, 316.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 527; see also V, 44.
- 40 *Ibid.*, V, 565.
- 41 *Ibid.*, V, 274.
- 42 *Ibid.*, V, 548.
- 43 *Ibid.*, V, 209, 245, 287.
- 44 Chapter V.
- 45 Bolingbroke, V, 547.
- 46 *Ibid.*, V, 548.
- 47 *Ibid.*, V, 544; see also V, 557.
- 48 *Ibid.*, V, 547.
- 49 *Ibid.*, IV, 314.
- 50 *Ibid.*, IV, 292; see also IV, 631-2; III, 339.
- 51 *Ibid.*, IV, 290.
- 52 *Ibid.*, IV, 313; see also IV, 328ff.
- 53 Charles Gray Shaw says (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, New York, 1915, V, 315) that "Bolingbroke began to cast suspicion upon the authenticity of natural religion by searching for evidence of it in history."
- 54 Bolingbroke, V, 228ff. Bolingbroke derives his knowledge of ancient China chiefly from *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis*, a translation of Confucius *Szu shu* edited by Prospero Intorcetta (see IV, 217-20; V, 228). The *Sinarum scientia* went through several editions during the 17th century. Harvard has the 1687 edition.
- 55 *Ibid.*, V, 240.
- 56 *Ibid.*, IV, 203.
- 57 Clarke, *Evidences* . . . , p. 170.
- 58 Locke, *Works*, VII, p. 141.
- 59 Bolingbroke, V, 221.
- 60 Clarke, *Evidences* . . . , p. 173.

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- 61 Bolingbroke, V, 222-3.
- 62 *Ibid.*, V, 223ff.
- 63 Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-9.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- 66 Bolingbroke, V, 225.
- 67 *Ibid.*, V, 226.
- 68 *Ibid.*, V, 226.
- 69 *Ibid.*, IV, 296.
- 70 Locke, *Works*, VII, 141.
- 71 Bolingbroke, V, 297.
- 72 *Ibid.*, V, 297.
- 73 *Ibid.*, IV, 299.
- 74 *Ibid.*, V, 227.
- 75 *Ibid.*, V, 227.

CHAPTER VII

Ethics

IN GENERAL, the deistic conception of ethics is of ancient rather than modern extraction. The deists as a group base their theories of morality on the law of nature, a conception which can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, which was used prominently by the Stoics, by Roman legislators, by the Church Fathers, and in modern times by Grotius, Pufendorf, Selden and Cumberland.¹ The Stoics were probably the first to develop a conception of natural law approximating that to which the deists subscribe. For the Stoics the law of nature was a law of reason, an ideal law which never became actual, for man was never perfectly rational. In Rome the conception acquired some practical significance, because it was a consideration in the minds of judges, a kind of spirit of just and humane interpretation, an ideal standard by which laws might be improved. Cicero emphasized the divine origin of natural law. The same conception passed later into the tradition of the Christian church by way of the Fathers who distinguished between the absolute law of nature—that in effect before Adam's Fall—and the relative law—that in effect since the Fall, and essentially a compromise between absolute natural law and positive law. In the seventeenth century the conception was given new vitality by Grotius who used it in his *De jure belli et pacis* (1625) to determine international rights

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and obligations. Since the time of Grotius the law of nature has become an important principle in the speculation of political and ethical philosophers.

For the deists, as we have seen, the true religion is the religion of nature, and the essential ingredient of that religion is morality. The moral code of natural religion, as one might expect, is called the law of nature. This code, like natural religion itself, can be discovered by reason. As Tindal says: The law of nature which "requires nothing but what is moral"² "is nothing but what the Light of Nature, or Reason dictates."³ Moreover, the law of nature is of divine origin and as such it is unchangeable. Annet, for example, says, "I conclude then, that the Laws of Nature being the Laws of God, they are as unchangeable as he is."⁴ Furthermore, Toland and Collins point out that the law of nature is normative for all moral laws: the moral law of Christianity is essentially a republication of it. Toland says, "One main design of Christianity was to improve and perfect the knowledge of the law of nature, as well as to facilitate and inforce the observation of the same."⁵ Collins suggests that "the *Morality* of the *Holy Scripture* is not to be precisely and distinctly understood, without an antecedent Knowledge in *Ethicks*, or the *Law* of Nature."⁶ Chubb agrees with Tindal and Annet that the law of nature is the law of God and with Toland and Collins that it is normative:

It is the law of God, as it is the rule of action, by which God always directs and governs his behaviour towards his creatures. And it is God's law, as he adopts it, and makes it his, by giving it as a rule of action to his subjects (he being the great Governor of the moral world) all God's laws being founded

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upon it, and conformed to it. But it is not God's law as founded solely on his will and commandment; because it is, and ought to be, a law or rules of action to all intelligent beings, whether God willed or commanded it, or not. And,

This law of nature is, in order of nature, above and before all other laws it being the ground and foundation of them; all laws, and government, whether human or divine, being originally founded, not in superiority of power, but in the reason of things, as afore-said.⁷

Chubb concludes, in his verbose manner, that, therefore, the moral excellence of all rational beings consists in their perfect subjection to the law of nature.⁸

Although most of the deists emphasize the importance of morality in any satisfactory religion, and especially in the true natural religion, they show little interest in developing an ethical theory. Chubb is one of the few deists who analyzes the principles involved in moral action. He postulates three of them—selfishness, benevolence, and reason:

Both selfishness and benevolence are founded in reason and are, therefore, proper principles of action to man, supposing this world were his all; and that there are cases in which either of these may be carried to an extremum, and thereby become unreasonable; and consequently, there may be cases in which selfishness ought, in reason, to give place to benevolence; and that there may be other cases in which benevolence ought, in reason to give place to selfishness.⁹

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By *founded in reason*, I take it, Chubb means natural; in effect he is agreeing with Shaftesbury that both self-love and social are natural affections. In another place Chubb suggests that he considers reason the superior principle. Man's appetites and passions, he says, "were intended to be *subjected*" to the intellectual principle,

it being qualified and constituted to be the judge whether, and how far his appetites and passions ought to be the *ground* and *reason* of action to him . . . but still, as a free being, it was left to his choice whether he would virtuously pursue that end, or viciously oppose it. . . ¹⁰

Bolingbroke was far more interested in ethics than any of the other deists. There are really two aspects to his ethical theory—one, in deist fashion, is based on natural law and looks back to Grotius and Pufendorf, and even to Cicero; the other, more technically philosophical and more original, is in reaction to the ethical theories of Hobbes, Cudworth, Clarke, and, possibly, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

Bolingbroke has apparently read extensively in the philosophy of natural law. His general reaction to the writers on the subject is anything but favorable. He counsels Pope:

Read Selden, read Grotius, read Cumberland,
read Puffendorf, to mention no others, if you
have leisure and patience for it: and after
you have done so, I will appeal to you for
the truth of the judgment I make. There are
many curious researches, no doubt, and many
excellent observations in these writers; but
they seem to be great writers on this subject
by much the same right, as he might be called

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a great traveller, who should go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.¹¹

His immediate reaction to the works of the specialists on natural law, then, is a typically deistic one. He thinks they confuse the reader by curious but unnecessary elaboration and research. More specifically, he objects to Seldon because he is not content to say merely that the law of nature is a divine law discoverable to man by the proper use of his reason. No, Selden insists "that reason cannot frame such an uniform stated rule of right and wrong as this law of nature has been represented."¹² Instead it has been necessary for God to reveal it specifically to man from time to time. Bolingbroke objects to Grotius because he makes the law of nature antecedent to the will of God.¹³ Such a procedure, Bolingbroke thinks, is degrading to God, for surely He is powerful enough to institute a law of nature when He creates man. It is ridiculous to say that God must follow the same law as man. Pufendorf is to be commended for holding to the contrary view,

that the morality of actions in a social creature, is derived from that social nature which God has been pleased to give him, and not from any immutable necessity. . .¹⁴

Bolingbroke accuses Cumberland of blasphemy when he talks "of promoting the good of the whole system of rational agents, among whom God is included, and of human benevolence towards him." As though God could be affected by man's effort on his behalf!¹⁵

Though he is very critical of all the writers on natural law, Bolingbroke's own doctrine follows in general outline the traditional theory. He says: "The law of nature is the law of God. Of this I have the same demonstrative knowledge, that I have of the existence of God, the all-

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perfect Being.”¹⁶ He is as certain of the law of nature as he is of God’s existence because he discovers it in the same way, by the use of right reason—that is, *a posteriori*, reason collects the law of nature from God’s works, or, as he sometimes says, “from the essential differences of things.”¹⁷ Never does Bolingbroke explain how reason discovers the law of nature from the works of God. He might have appealed to the *consensus gentium* for a *a posteriori* proof of the law of nature, for he does, as we shall see, emphasize the universality of the law.

In one passage Bolingbroke suggests that the law of nature is discovered by instinct as well as reason:

Instinct and reason may be conceived as different promulgations of the same law; one made of a part only by nature herself, immediately and universally; the other marked out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from these marks or notices by reason, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreeably to them or not.¹⁸

It is difficult to understand what Bolingbroke’s meaning is here. He has been talking about animals who in Athens and elsewhere have been punished for their transgressions, as though they were subject to a certain law forbidding those transgressions. If he were speaking of the law of the animals’ nature as a law discoverable by instinct, the meaning would be clear enough. But he is referring to human beings. Apparently his meaning is that some aspects of the law of nature, the law to which human beings are subject, are discoverable by instinct, that man is led blindly but intuitively towards the discovery of the laws which his reason later displays to him.¹⁹

Inasmuch as the law of nature is found by reasons,

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or even possibly by instinct, it must be universal, accessible to all men, everywhere, and at all times: "This law is immutably the same at all times, and in all places";²⁰ indeed, "I do not believe that there ever was a time, when it could be said with truth that the law of nature was imperfectly known."²¹ "All men do not discover it indeed alike, tho all men, even the most savage and ignorant, have, as I believe, some imperfect notions of it, which observation and experience force into their minds."²² If this law is available to all men always, it must be "one of the plainest and most important objects of our thoughts."²³ In fact, "the plainness and simplicity" of it is a convincing "internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature."²⁴

Bolingbroke makes it quite clear that this important law, "the law of laws,"²⁵ as he calls it, is a moral law; it is the law which gives man distinctions between moral good and evil.²⁶ Under this law "nothing but morality was prescribed, and nothing but immorality forbid."²⁷ It is man's chief duty to obey this law of nature: "Obedience to the law of nature is our first duty, and our greatest interest: the happiness of our whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it."²⁸ Indeed, "the man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts against his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it."²⁹

To encourage obedience to this moral code God has instituted a sanction, that virtue, or observance of the law, tends to produce happiness and that vice, or transgression against the law tends to produce misery.³⁰ But this sanction is not sufficiently perfect to effect complete obedience to the law. Even with the supposed occasional intercessions of God and with the discipline of human

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civil laws, there are still infractions of the law of nature. Surely its sanction must be very imperfect. Bolingbroke reminds us that the term *imperfect* is equivocal. The sanction accompanying the law of nature may be imperfect from an absolute point of view but perfect relative to the system God has designed. The only way we can judge what God has designed is by observing what He has done. Since man's state is one of only moderate or mixed happiness, we must conclude that such was God's design. If God had intended "to make the state of mankind as happy as the universal and steady observation of this law would make it, he would have made the sanctions of the law as perfect as the law."³¹

If we assume that other sanctions are necessary to enforce the law of nature, they cannot be rewards and punishments of a future state, because sanctions must be coeval with and a part of the law they enforce. They must be prior to all acts of obedience or disobedience to the law. It is true, new sanctions can be added by the same authority that instituted the original law, but it is only just that these new sanctions be as public as the old,³² and future rewards are not. We know that these sanctions were not taught by Moses, for example; and it is likely they were known but not believed by ancient philosophers.³³ Plainly the sanction of future rewards and punishments is of human not of divine authority.³⁴ In fact, it would appear such "by the evident marks of humanity that characterise it." The sanction implies that the human passions of love, hatred, anger, vengeance are applicable to God, for it is only through such passions that He would desire to punish and reward in the future state as He is said to do.³⁵

The fundamental principle of the law of nature, Bolingbroke says, is universal benevolence.³⁶ Closely related

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to this fundamental principle are various general precepts. Because these precepts are general, "the particular application of them, and the means of securing their effect, are left to human prudence."³⁷ One of those precepts, "increase and multiply," Bolingbroke discusses at great length.³⁸ The problem is how most efficiently to actualize this precept. Bolingbroke considers promiscuity and the various types of marriage—monogamy and the two types of polygamy. Promiscuity could not be the proper method of enforcing the precept because the child of promiscuous parents would not know its father, and paternal love, if not one of the laws of nature can validly be implied from them. Monogamy is not the best form of marriage. Monogamy was instituted by the lawgivers of Greece, Rome, and other states merely because they feared that the large families resulting from polygamous unions would be too great an expense for the state. The institution has been supported in part by the vicious desires of many men and women who entered into monogamous marriages to assure themselves of legitimate issue and then felt perfectly free to satisfy their lusts elsewhere. In short, monogamy is a reasonable institution only if divorces are allowed:

Without them it is an absurd, unnatural, and cruel imposition. It crosses the intention of nature doubly, as it stands in opposition to human species, and as it forbids the sole expedient, by which this evil can be lessened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many cases, at all carried out.³⁹

Polygamy, of course, is of two sorts—polyandry and polygyny.⁴⁰ The former Bolingbroke condemns as unnatural and against good policy. Polyandry, he is certain, must always have been a double polygamy, "since

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we cannot believe that the superior sex ever submitted their prerogative to the inferior.”⁴¹ On the other hand, all the purposes of marriage are satisfied by polygyny.

It has therefore prevailed always, and it still prevails generally, if not universally, either as a reasonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and, in the early ages, a necessary expedient to increase their numbers. Such, it is, no doubt, such it must be, in the order of nature. . .⁴²

Note that Bolingbroke emphasizes the universality of the institution as evidence of its reasonableness and, indirectly, as evidence of its being consistent with the law of nature.

Just as it enjoins various precepts, so the law of nature makes several prohibitions. The following, Bolingbroke is certain, it forbids: idolatry, blasphemy, murder (except in self-defense), theft, sodomy, and bestiality.⁴³ Incest he is uncertain about; it can be forbidden by civil laws, but he can’t see how it can be forbidden by the law of nature, because, if it were, how could the children of Adam have propagated?⁴⁴

Since the law of nature is of divine origin and is universally ascertainable, it must bear the same relationship to other laws that natural religion bears to other religions. In other words, natural law is normative for all laws; it is the true original and criterion of them. It is the primeval law, the law by which men governed their actions even in the state of nature before the institution of societies:

This *primaeval* law is that code wherein all the laws, to which God has subjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the glosses which sometimes explain and some-

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times perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; whilst the other remains immutable like that of God.⁴⁵

Actually, such a theory of natural law approaches perilously close to the eternal, immutable morality of the Platonists, which Bolingbroke so rigorously opposes. It differs from the Platonic theory chiefly because the epithet eternal is omitted. The morality implicit in Bolingbroke's theory of the law of nature is absolutely changeless but not absolutely timeless. The law which human beings must obey in order to be moral was fashioned by the will of God when He created human beings; it is not antecedent to His will.

Bolingbroke's reaction to the Platonists is important because his own technical theory of ethics is essentially an attempt to find a middle position between Platonic and Hobbesian ethics:

I cannot soar so high [he says] as Plato and Cudworth. I will not sink so low as Protagoras, and other antients; as Hobbes, and other moderns. The former amaze, instead of instructing me; and if I understand the latter, I only understand them, to know that they impose on themselves, and would impose on me, the grossest absurdities. Strange extremes! When Cudworth holds up the metaphysical glass to the eye, I see something, I know not what; something that glitters at an immeasurable distance from me. When Hobbes holds it up, he changes the position: and I see something monstrous at the very end of the glass.⁴⁶

The Platonists, more specifically, assume that morality is prior to any signification and even to the the actual

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determination of God's will; whereas, Hobbes assumes that morality is dependent upon the will of man, that there was no distinction between good and evil, just and unjust until man had formed societies and instituted civil laws. Cudworth, like Plato, makes eternal, independent natures the measure of all things; Hobbes, like Protagoras, makes man the measure:

It seems to me, that both these opinions tend to weaken the authority of natural religion. By the first, God published, indeed, a moral law, when he made moral agents. But he was not properly the legislator. The law existed before them, and it binds both him and them. By the second, he has not so much as the appearance of legislature. He made a moral world, indeed, but he made it in confusion, and he left it without any rule, till at last his creatures made one for themselves. He brought order out of the confusion of a physical, they out of that of a moral chaos. How preferable is the middle opinion between these two extremes, that God instituted moral obligations when he made moral agents, that the law of their nature is the law of his will and that, how indifferent soever we may presume, every thing is to him before his will has determined it to be, it becomes, after this determination, a necessary, tho created, nature.⁴⁷

In general, Bolingbroke's criticism seems to be that it is inconsistent with natural religion—he might have said natural law—that the source of man's moral code be anything but the will of God. He has already told us that the law of nature, or the moral law, is from God.

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Cudworth and other Platonists base their conception of morality as timeless and unchangeable on a particular conception of the essence. They say that true moral distinctions between good and evil can be made only by reference to the essential nature of goodness, that the goodness of an act is independent of any arbitrary will, whether God's or man's. A given act is good, therefore, if it corresponds to the essence, goodness. And as the essence, goodness, is eternal and immutable, morality is eternal and immutable. But, says Bolingbroke, if morality is eternal and immutable, both it and the essence upon which it is based must be independent of God. This he considers a shocking conclusion. Surely the essence, if there is any such entity, must be dependent on God's will; it must have been created by His will at the same time that He created man. Bolingbroke cites as authority for his position Descartes' theory, that the essence is dependent upon the will of God, but that it is immutable and eternal because God wills it be thus. Descartes, he says, would defend his theory against opponents like Cudworth by saying that the essences and the truths we know of them are immutable "because they affirm what is conformable to that universal nature whereof God is the author."⁴⁸ Thus, the essences are immutable like nature, but also like nature dependent on God. If Cudworth were to reply, as his *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* would indicate he might, that the essences are dependent on, or rather participate in, the divine wisdom, and that, therefore, they are not strictly speaking independent of God but only His will, Bolingbroke's reply would be that it is absurd to try to distinguish God's wisdom from His will. (Wisdom and power, after all, are the only attributes one can reasonably recognize.)

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One should not analyze the intellect of God, as one does that of man, by dividing and parceling it out. Because we know that the will of man should be controlled by the superior faculty reason, does it follow that God also has a faculty as "blind, dark, plumbean, flexible, and liable to be seduced"⁴⁹ as the will of man so that it has to be controlled by God's superior faculty, wisdom? It certainly does not, Bolingbroke tells us. Indeed, it is blasphemous to judge God's intellect by man's. Again Bolingbroke's argument turns on his abhorrence for anthropomorphism.

It is said that God created the world out of chaos. According to the Platonists He created it out of a kind of intellectual chaos,

a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal essences, independent on God, self-existent, and therefore coaeval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos, God sees, and man must endeavour to see, the natures, the real essences of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the existence of any moral agents, before there was any system of being, from which the obligations to it could result, or to which they could be applied: just as the same philosophers suppose the incorporeal essences of white and black, for instance, to have existed when there was no such thing as color, and those of a square and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.⁵⁰

It may be possible, and indeed, it is likely, that God foreknew every system He was ever to create, including all the relationships between the various individuals to

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constitute those systems and, consequently, the moral rules by which those individuals should govern themselves. But it does not follow from this possibility that all these systems had prior existence as essences.

In the last analysis, Bolingbroke wonders, what are these essences the Platonists talk about? They say they are "such intelligible essences, and rationes of things, as are objects of mind." And what are the objects of the mind? They are ideas—simple and complex ideas—not incorporeal substances at all. "They are merely certain abstract ideas which philosophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame . . ." ⁵¹ Since they are simply ideas in the minds of particular men, essences cannot possibly be the source of the absolute morality Cudworth, Clarke, Grotius, and others ⁵² would have them be. And, of course, the conclusion is that there is no such thing as eternal and immutable morality. Morality is coeval to the human system and unchangeable relative to it but not absolutely timeless and unchangeable.

Bolingbroke agrees with the Platonists on one point, at any rate—that Hobbes' explanation of morality is virtually insane. ⁵³ His criticism of Hobbes' theory is based on his conception of the law of nature. Hobbes says, in effect, that there is no law of nature prior to civil laws, that there is therefore no possible distinction between right and wrong until a human legislator has arbitrarily determined it. But, Bolingbroke objects, there must have been "a law of nature peculiar to man." Otherwise, how could you explain men forming peaceful societies and wolves and tigers continuing in a warlike state? Men formed societies because they had a natural law of right reason which the wolves and tigers lacked. ⁵⁴ Hobbes makes the mistake of thinking

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man in the state of nature is under the control of his appetites alone; whereas, he is also under the control of his reason, which, if artless and inexperienced, is also undebauched and, therefore, abundantly able to discover the law of nature for him.⁵⁵

Bolingbroke thinks he can force Hobbes into admitting the existence of the law of nature and a distinction between just and unjust in his state of nature. Hobbes says that men enter into societies in order to avoid the evils of a state of constant warfare. Such action, according to Bolingbroke, implies that even in a state of nature some things should be done and other things should be avoided:

Now if some things were fit to be prevented, some things were unfit to be done, in the supposed state of nature; from whence it follows, that the distinction between just and unjust was made before governments were instituted, or legislators made it, which the same Mr. Hobbes denies.⁵⁶

Virtually the same argument is used by Clarke in his *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*:

And yet at the same time he supposes, that in the same State of Nature, Men are by all obliged to seek Peace, and to *enter into Compacts* to remedy the fore-mentioned Mischiefs. Now if Men are obliged by the original reason and nature of things to *seek terms of Peace*, and *get out of the pretended natural State of War*, as soon as they can; how come they not to be obliged originally by the same reason and nature of things, to live from the beginning in *universal Benevolence*, and *avoid entering into the State of War* at all?⁵⁷

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Bolingbroke suggests that Hobbes acknowledges right reason to be the rule of man's conduct, though not the law of it. The reason Bolingbroke alleges for Hobbes' reluctance to accept it as a law is probably valid—he is unwilling to acknowledge a lawgiver:

Nay, an avowed atheist might indulge us in the use of this term, like Hobbes, whether he was one or no, tho some divines will not; for the rule of right reason must appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happiness or unhappiness of mankind consequent to the observation or the breach of it: all which together, he must own, would amount to a law, if he could bring himself to acknowledge a lawgiver. . .⁵⁸

In another context Bolingbroke is more outspoken: -“The fault of Hobbes lay here, he put the supreme Being out of the case entirely, ascribed no legislative authority or no exercise of it to him. . .”⁵⁹

Bolingbroke has one more objection to Hobbes' ethical theory. From the very nature of moral obligation, he says, a human legislator cannot be its source. A moral obligation binds us by an internal necessity to conform “ourselves to those rules which are expressed in the constitution of our nature.” Only our reason can subject us to such an obligation. It is true, a human legislator can coerce us, can force us to observe certain law, but such constraint is merely “an outward, a physical necessity” which implies no moral obligation.⁶⁰

In opposition to Hobbes' egoism Bolingbroke affirms and emphasizes man's natural benevolence. We have heard him call “universal benevolence” the fundamental principle of the law of nature. He goes even farther

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than that by saying that man is instinctively a social being, that by the instinctive law of his nature he tends to be sociable, in much the same way, I suppose, that certain animals tend to flock together. "Sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter."⁶¹ Animated bodies "have, by instinct, a sort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in society."⁶² More specifically, instinct leads us to general sociability by directing us towards the pleasurable, and then reason, a superior principle which can remember the past and foresee the future, confirms the tendency of instinct by giving us a sense of happiness—happiness being pleasure from a long term point of view, or pleasure continued over a period. Human happiness, therefore, is founded on sociability; happiness is impossible outside of society.⁶³

Bolingbroke suggests that there is a kind of evolution of law which results in self-love being necessarily directed to sociability:

There is a sort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law sociability, sociability union of societies by consent, and this union by consent the obligation of civil laws. When I make sociability the daughter of natural law, and the grand-daughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original spring of human actions, directs us necessarily to sociability.⁶⁴

In this passage Bolingbroke seems to consider self-love and social in effect the same. Let us look at another passage in which he reaches about the same conclusion:

We are designed to be social, not solitary crea-

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tures. Mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happiness depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and tho every man is not able for different reasons to discern it, or discerning it to apply it, yet so many are able to do this that they serve as guides to the rest. . . Pleasures are the objects of self-love, happiness that of reason. Reason is so far from depriving us of the first, that happiness consists in a series of them: and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed securely out of society, a due use of our reason makes social and self-love coincide, or even become in effect the same.⁶⁵

Though in this passage he reaches the same conclusion as in the previous passage, Bolingbroke's emphasis has slightly changed. He no longer considers benevolence an instinct; it is something attained by *a due use of our reason*.

Thus far, Bolingbroke's doctrine of benevolence would seem to be under the influence of Shaftesbury, though Shaftesbury does not postulate reason as a principle in moral conduct. Actually rather than being under the positive influence of Shaftesbury, I think he is under the negative influence of Hobbes. He is reacting against the selfishness of Hobbes by asserting the benevolence which he might have found in the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, or Butler.

When Bolingbroke discusses "moral sense," a doctrine which must refer specifically either to Shaftesbury or to Hutcheson, his attitude is unmitigatedly hostile. He warns us that we must be content with that knowledge which God has revealed to us in nature, that we must

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not seek more perfect knowledge through alleged eternal essences or by postulating a moral sense. There are those, he says, who

affirm that they have (and the sole proof in this case, as in the case of abstraction, is affirmation) a moral sense, that is an instinct by which they distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation accordingly, without the trouble of observation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthusiasts in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as some of their brothers have made revealed religion, by insisting on the doctrine of inward light.⁶⁶

It is absurd—whimsical is the word he uses—to claim a moral sense is natural. Bolingbroke even goes so far as to hint that Shaftesbury and Hutcheson are atheists:

An atheist who has much imagination, much elevation of mind, and a great warmth of inward sentiment, may, perhaps, contemplate the differences of things in abstract consideration, and contrast the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice till he falls in love, if I may use the expression after Tully, with the former, and grows to abhor every appearance of the latter. He may create, in this manner, in himself, as it were, an artificial moral sense; for to assume any such natural instinct is as absurd as to assume innate ideas or any other of the platonic whimsies.⁶⁷

Clearly this refers to Shaftesbury or Hutcheson, both of whom emphasize the beauty of virtue.

Bolingbroke might have found his criticism of the

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doctrine of moral sense in King's dissertation preliminary to *The Origin of Evil*, where King accuses Hutcheson—and he is referring specifically to Hutcheson rather than Shaftesbury—of not “*proving*, unless by shewing the insufficiency of all other Schemes”⁶⁸ this doctrine, and where he also says, “I deny that this Moral Sense, or these public Affections, are innate, or *implanted* in us. They are acquired either from our own *Observation* or the *Imitation* of others.”⁶⁹

To come back to Bolingbroke's own ethical theory—though he emphasizes man's natural benevolence against Hobbes, he also, at times, stresses man's natural selfishness against Shaftesbury. The latter emphasis is not to be found to any great extent in the *Works* as edited by David Mallet, though Bolingbroke does say there:

We love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies, to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the center of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it is the weakest.⁷⁰

Bolingbroke's egoism is found chiefly in his *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles*. In this pamphlet he denies the existence of all innate principles except “that native and general Principle of all our Actions,”⁷¹ self-love, which, he admits, “is certainly an innate Principle.”⁷² Reason, education, habit, or custom often make moral principles look natural, so that in well-regulated societies compassion, filial love, and other benevolent impulses may be common principles. But all these apparently universal moral principles are founded on self-love. Man is born with that principle alone. He be-

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comes a compassionate or benevolent creature only after education has developed reason sufficiently for it to guide his self-love to proper moral objects.⁷³

Certainly all this seems contradictory to Bolingbroke's conception of benevolence as the fundamental law of nature. How can egoism of the *Reflections* be accounted for? The easiest way would be to call that treatise spurious, to suggest that Mallet did not publish it in the *Works* because he thought it such. Indeed, Macknight is suspicious of the pamphlet's authenticity, though he concludes that it is Bolingbroke's composition:

In the advertisement it was stated that this little philosophical treatise had been written in French by the late Lord Bolingbroke for a club in Paris, and that the manuscript was in some respects imperfect. The work appeared in a somewhat suspicious manner; but on examination it will afford ample evidence of being Bolingbroke's composition.⁷⁴

Macknight also says that the conclusions Bolingbroke reaches in this treatise "are at least consistent with the general tenor of his philosophy."⁷⁵ One would almost think Macknight had not read the *Fragments*. What could be more inconsistent than asserting that benevolence is the universal law of human nature, that man is instinctively social, and also asserting that there are no innate, no universal moral principles except self-love?

Assuming the *Reflections* to be Bolingbroke's work, however, for I know of no sufficient reason to deny its authenticity, how is one to reconcile it to his other ethical theories?

First of all, I think it is necessary to deny that Boling-

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broke intends seriously to consider that benevolence is instinctive, even though he has said, probably in his eagerness to deny Hobbes' position, that "sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature." (We have seen him before assert in one context what he would deny in another.) Secondly, I want to emphasize what he says about self-love, that it is the "original spring of human action." Doesn't he mean that self-love is the only spring, or principle, of action with which man is born? He stresses again and again how active and quick self-love is and how slow and sluggish reason is. Reason, moreover, must be trained by experience and education. Self-love would seem, therefore, to be the one principle on which man can really depend. Perhaps this is not so very far from saying that it is the only innate principle? But reason, nevertheless, when functioning properly, presents man with the law of nature which is the same for all men all the time. The precepts of the law of nature, however, are general, so general that they must be interpreted and made more specific by reason, and this time reason working necessarily *a priori*⁷⁶ and, therefore, highly fallible. Perhaps the fallibility of this process of deducing specific rules from these general laws accounts for the relativism made so much of in the *Reflections*. Members of one society interpret the law of nature in one way; members of another society interpret it in an entirely different way.

Ultimately, the two diverse strains in Bolingbroke's ethics—one absolutistic, the other relativistic—are to be explained as an ideal and a practical aspect of his theory. Ideally, though self-love merely spurs us to action, reason soon takes control, discovers the law of nature and the universal principle of it, benevolence;

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self-love thus leads necessarily to social, and man is happy. But, practically, self-love is so agile and quick that with the aid of the passions it causes us to act for the immediate pleasure before reason, which is slow and awkward and often corrupted, can exercise the necessary control, with the result that self-love does not lead to social, and man is unhappy. In the world these moral principles sometimes work perfectly, but more often imperfectly; as a consequence mankind's state is at best one of mixed happiness. In the following passage Bolingbroke explains this dichotomy between the ideal and the practical:

That true self-love and social are the same, as you [Alexander Pope] have expressed a maxim, I have always thought most undeniably evident; or that the author of nature has so constituted the human system, that they coincide in it, may be easily demonstrated to any one who is able to compare a very few clear and determinate ideas. But it will not follow, that he to whom this demonstration is made, nor even he who makes it, shall regulate his conduct according to it, nor reduce to practice what is true in speculation. We are so made, that a less immediate good will determine the generality of mankind, in opposition to one that is much greater, even according to our own measure of things, but more remote; and an agreeable momentary sensation will be preferred to any lasting and real advantage which reason alone can hold out to us, and reflection alone can make us perceive. Philosophy may teach us to do voluntarily, as I have read that Aristotle says it does, what

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others are constrained to do by force. But the many were not philosophers: and therefore the few might think very plausibly, that fear was necessary to make them act as such. The influence of reason is slow and calm, that of the passions sudden and violent. Reason therefore might suggest the art that served to turn the passions on her side.⁷⁷

We have seen Bolingbroke repudiate the eternal, immutable morality of the Platonists, the man-made, relativistic morality of Hobbes, and the moral sense of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. What he really seeks is a middle position between the Platonists and Hobbes. In the last analysis, his ethics is to be described as a kind of rationalistic, or enlightened, egoism. Man is born with only one principle, self-love; but that principle ideally leads him to sociability. For reason enables him to understand that it is his moral duty to live according to the law of nature, the fundamental principle of which is universal benevolence. Therefore, in so far as a man is moral he is benevolent. Practically speaking, however, there are many immoral men; for bad manners, faulty education, or some other unfortunate influence can corrupt reason to such an extent that it is incapable of leading one from self-love to social.

¹ For short discussions of the historical development of natural law see the following: Ernest Baker, "Introduction," Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. xxxivff; R. Eucken, "Law," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VII, pp. 805-6; and Henry Sidwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (London, 1931), pp. 160ff.

² Tindal, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁴ Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁵ Toland, *Nazarenus*, p. 67.

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- 6 Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 12.
- 7 Chubb, *A Discourse concerning Reason . . .*, pp. 54-5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 10 Chubb, *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*, p. 200.
- 11 Bolingbroke, V, 68.
- 12 *Ibid.*, V, 69.
- 13 *Ibid.*, V, 42.
- 14 *Ibid.*, V, 43.
- 15 *Ibid.*, V, 82.
- 16 *Ibid.*, V, 190; see also V, 73, 93, 245, 511; IV, 285.
- 17 *Ibid.*, IV, 284; see also V, 55, 93.
- 18 *Ibid.*, V, 80.
- 19 The passage in which Bolingbroke calls the law of nature instinctive is important because such language sounds almost as though he were postulating a moral sense, a doctrine we shall see him deny.
- 20 Bolingbroke, V, 150.
- 21 *Ibid.*, V, 202.
- 22 *Ibid.*, V, 41.
- 23 *Ibid.*, V, 42.
- 24 *Ibid.*, V, 94-5.
- 25 *Ibid.*, V, 104, 153.
- 26 *Ibid.*, V, 52.
- 27 *Ibid.*, V, 547.
- 28 *Ibid.*, V, 209.
- 29 *Ibid.*, V, 65.
- 30 *Ibid.*, V, 456.
- 31 *Ibid.*, V, 512.
- 32 In another context (IV, 289) Bolingbroke says: "The future rewards and punishments are not original nor direct sanctions of the law of nature, because not coeval with it, yet they became such when the christian revelation was made. They are original sanctions of christianity, and christianity which includes, was designed to enforce, the law of nature."
- 33 *Ibid.*, V, 512-13.
- 34 *Ibid.*, V, 514.
- 35 *Ibid.*, V, 514-15.
- 36 *Ibid.*, IV, 282; V, 429; cf. V, 99, 278.
- 37 *Ibid.*, V, 178.
- 38 *Ibid.*, V, 158ff.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 167-8. Bolingbroke's theory was doubtless influenced by his own experience with marriage.
- 40 These terms are not used by Bolingbroke.
- 41 *Ibid.*, V, 160.
- 42 *Ibid.*, V, 160.
- 43 *Ibid.*, V, 156, 179, 182.
- 44 *Ibid.*, V, 172-3, 176.
- 45 *Ibid.*, V, 58; see also V, 55, 99.
- 46 *Ibid.*, V, 13-14.
- 47 *Ibid.*, V, 440-1.

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- 48 *Ibid.*, V, 4.
- 49 *Ibid.*, V, 5.
- 50 *Ibid.*, V, 5-6.
- 51 *Ibid.*, V, 15.
- 52 *Ibid.*, V, 42ff. Bolingbroke thinks Clarke even more ridiculous than Cudworth, for he carries the latter's theory to the extreme of asserting that moral truths are "as manifest as mathematical truths" (V, 435).
- 53 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 54 *Ibid.*, V, 52.
- 55 *Ibid.*, V, 59.
- 56 *Ibid.*, V, 59.
- 57 Clarke, *Evidences* . . . , p. 101.
- 58 Bolingbroke, V, 69.
- 59 *Ibid.*, V, 87.
- 60 *Ibid.*, V, 55.
- 61 *Ibid.*, V, 278.
- 62 *Ibid.*, V, 376.
- 63 *Ibid.*, V, 81-2; see also V, 54.
- 64 *Ibid.*, V, 80.
- 65 *Ibid.*, V, 384.
- 66 *Ibid.*, V, 86.
- 67 *Ibid.*, IV, 286.
- 68 William King, "Preliminary Dissertation . . .", *op. cit.*, p. xxx.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. lv.
- 70 Bolingbroke, V, 82.
- 71 Bolingbroke, *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles* (London, 1752), p. 21. It is curious Moore should not have made use of this pamphlet.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 74 Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 697-8.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 699.
- 76 Bolingbroke admits the necessity of using the *a priori* method he has condemned.
- 77 Bolingbroke, IV, 27-8.

CHAPTER VIII

Criticism of Priestcraft, Metaphysics, and Theology

I HAVE SAID that deism is readily analyzable into positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect which is based upon a conception of God as external to the world, culminates in the assertion of a natural, or ethical, religion. The negative aspect, which is based primarily upon conception of reason as essentially uniform, represents the deists' attempt to explain why natural religion has never really prevailed in the world. It has not prevailed, they say, because man has failed to recognize the limitations of his reason. Instead of reasoning merely *a posteriori* from God's works to a few unquestionable conclusions, he has sought knowledge beyond his reach by reasoning *a priori* from God to man, from general to particular. Metaphysicians have tried to explain the whole system of man and nature by this method. Divines, jealous for their ecclesiastical institutions, have used the same method, and have appropriated the conclusions of the metaphysicians to pervert natural religion.

The world, Toland says, is

overstock'd with the *Acrostick* Discourses of Aristotle, with the *Esoterick* Doctrines of *Pythagoras*, and the Mysterious Jargon of the other Sects of Philosophers; for they all made high Pretences to some rare and wonderful Secrets not communicable to every one of the Learned, and never to any of the Vulgar.¹

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He also suggests that many of the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and others "are directly repugnant to common Sense and good Morals"² and, consequently, to natural religion. Esoteric theology, moreover, is as much to be condemned as metaphysics:

For as in Philosophy so in Religion every Sect has its peculiar Extravagancies, and the IN-COMPREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES of the latter do perfectly answer the OCCULT QUALITIES of the former. They were both calculated at first for the same Ends, viz. *to stop the Mouths of such as demand a Reason where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance as Interest shall think convenient.*³

This passage suggests another important phase of negative deism—opposition to the priesthood. The priests offered a convenient scapegoat. They could be blamed for the corruption of natural religion, not merely because they used the wrong method of reasoning but also because they were a selfish, unconscionable group interested only in enhancing their own power and prestige.

The deists' opposition to priestcraft began with Charles Blount who in his *Religio laici* says:

Our Modern Priests (for the most part) turn Religion into Faction, striving to render all others of different Persuasions (though in the least matters) odious.⁴

In another treatise, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, he depicts the machinations of the heathen clergy. They "turn'd Religion into a Trade," and "under pretence of wishing well to others, enrich and advantage themselves: They not being like the Pastors of the Christian

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Church.”⁶ The comparison with the Christian clergy is certainly ironic. Toland in his *Nazarenus* tells how “a rampant Priesthood”⁷ perverted Christianity. Collins wrote a tract entitled *Priestcraft in Perfection*, in which he accuses the clergy of fraud in inserting a spurious clause, that “The Church hath Power to Decree Rites and Ceremonys, and Authority in Controversys of Faith,” in the Articles of the Church of England. His conclusion is that “Divines . . . think themselves oblig’d in Conscience to promote the good of the Church by Fraud (as well as Force).”⁸ In his *Discourse of Free-Thinking* he says that he could cite many instances of the conduct of priests:

such as *their Declamations against Reason; their Arts and Methods of Discouraging Examination* into the Truths of Religion; and *their encouraging Examination* when Authority is against them, or when they think that Truth is clearly on their side; their instilling Principles into Youth, &c.⁹

Indeed, he says, “The Priests do not study Divinity properly so call’d, but only how to maintain a certain System of Divinity.”¹⁰ When Woolston thinks of the future, he hopes for the extinction of priestcraft:

I am delightfull ravish’d and transported with the Forethought and Contemplation of the Happiness of Mankind, upon the Extinction of Ecclesiastical *Vermin*, out of God’s House; when the World will return to its *Primogenial* and *Paradisiacal* State of Nature, Religion and Liberty; in which we shall be *all taught of God* and have no need of a foolish and contentious Priest, hired to harrangue us with his Noise and Nonsense.¹¹

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Tindal comments that unfortunately common people are

impos'd on by artful Men; who, in all Ages and Places, have mixed with pure Religion, things tending, indeed, to their own Honour, and their own Good; but far from being consistent with the Honour of God, and the Good of Man. . . And from this Source have issu'd out most of those Absurdities, which, to the Scandal of human Nature, have over-run Mankind; and which, for the most part, were too subtile and metaphysical for the common People, if left to themselves ever to have thought of; much less to have rais'd Commotions about them.¹²

Even so moderate a deist as Morgan suggests that "it is a more difficult Thing for a Clergyman to be wise and honest, than for any other Man to be so."¹³ It is difficult for him because he is obliged to consider himself as a representative of the church, constrained to think as the church thinks in matters of doctrine and theory.¹⁴ Annet says, "The Mystery-Mongers all over the World have barred the Door against private Judgment," which they object to because it "is so destructive to *Priestcraft*."¹⁵ Most of Annet's anti-clerical enthusiasm is vented in his *History and Character of St. Paul*, where he describes Paul as "this temporizing Apostle,"¹⁶ and enthusiast¹⁷ of vacillating temper and character¹⁸ who certainly "did not always speak Truth, but sometimes endeavored to deceive others."¹⁹ Annet thinks he was a man who loved power and merely affected humility and talked about his sufferings in order to exalt himself.²⁰ Annet's attitude towards the

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Christian Fathers is even more unfavorable than his attitude towards Paul:

To be particular about the Fathers, their Ambition, Insolence, Avarice, Ignorance, Faction, Sedition, Persecution of each other, Cruelty, Murders, Lies and Forgeries, and other flagrant Vices would be endless; yet these are the Men whose Honesty we are to depend upon for conveying to us the *Oracles of Truth*.²¹

Middleton also opposes the Fathers, denying their miracles and special inspiration, though his attitude is not so depreciating as Annet's.²²

Bolingbroke's anti-intellectualism, which is more extensive than that of most of the deists, takes two general forms—opposition to metaphysics and metaphysicians and opposition to theology and divines.

He does considerable ranting against metaphysics and metaphysicians. He speaks on "metaphysical madness,"²³ the "delirium of metaphysics"²⁴ and of metaphysicians,²⁵ and he calls metaphysics, in short, "mere jargon."²⁶ But he has more than this to say about metaphysics, though one might not think so to read Leland and Warburton. Perhaps the best general statement of Bolingbroke's position is to be found in the following passage:

I consider the constant contemplation of nature, by which I mean the *whole* system of God's works, as far as it lies open to us, as the common spring of all sciences. . . What has been said, agreeably to this notion, seems to me evidently true; and yet metaphysical divines and philosophers proceed in direct contradiction to it, and have thereby, if I mistake

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not, bewildered themselves and a great part of mankind, in such inextricable labyrinth of hypothetical reasoning, that few men can find their way back, and none can find it forward into the road of truth. To dwell long and on some points always in particular knowledge, tires the patience of these impetuous philosophers. They fly to generals. To consider, attentively, even the minutest phaenomena of body and mind mortifies their pride. Rather than creep up slowly, *a posteriori*, to a little general knowledge, they soar at once as far, and as high, as imagination can carry them. From thence they descend again armed with systems and arguments *a priori*, and regardless how these agree, or clash with the phaenomena of nature, they impose them on mankind.²⁷

Thus, his fundamental objection to metaphysicians is that they postulate esoteric systems by reasoning *a priori*; instead of basing their conceptions on certain knowledge, they proceed from hypothesis to hypothesis, until they and everyone else are confused. They lack the patience to examine particulars carefully; they must generalize at once—"fly to generals." And it is these men who are looked upon as learned and wise. Metaphysicians and divines are commonly thought to have carried learning to its height. They are the ones said to have advanced our knowledge. But the fact is "that there would be more real knowledge and more true wisdom among mankind, if there was less learning and less philosophy."²⁸ Metaphysicians have always made the mistake of assuming that the mind had imaginary powers, that it can completely abstract form from mat-

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ter, that it can attain real knowledge by reasoning *a priori*. Such philosophers soar so high in their imaginary flights that they leave all reason far behind. Imagination gains control over reason, and poetical rapture rather than valid knowledge results. It is all right for Pope to adorn philosophy (Bolingbroke's philosophy) with poetry, but it is specious and dangerous to adorn poetry with philosophy. As Bolingbroke says to Pope:

You give us philosophy in a poetical dress.

You adorn, but do not disguise, and much less corrupt the truth. There are who have given us mere poetry in a philosophical dress: and, I think you must admit that Plato, Malebranche, and a good friend of ours [Berkeley], to instance in none of inferior note, are as truly poets as Homer and you. In a word, the boasted power of framing complex ideas, and abstract notions, will be found, as it is exercised, to be so far from shewing the great force and extent of human intellect, and from raising man up to divinity, that it will shew, on the contrary, how weak and how confined intellect is, and sink him down, if you will allow me such an expression, into that animality above which he affects so vainly to rise.²⁹

Philosophers who, like Plato, form metaphysical systems explaining the whole order of the universe on the basis of imagination rather than reason compose spiritual romances comparable to *Amadis of Gaul*. Such philosophers write without any regard to probability, "and no man could read them with any attention, nor suffer his imagination, to wander long so extravagantly, who was not as mad as the knight of La Mancha."³⁰

Some imaginative metaphysical writers make their

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works readable by an extravagant use of figures of speech. Such a procedure is permissible in a work which intends merely to amuse but certainly not in a philosophical work which should be instructive. Figures should be used in philosophical works, Bolingbroke says, as varnish over a painting:

It must not be used to alter the intellectual picture, it must only serve to give a greater lustre, and to make it better seen.³¹ In short, it seems to me that the business of the philosopher is to dilate . . . to press, to prove, to convince, and that of the poet to hint, to touch his subject with short and spirited strokes, to warm the affections, and to speak to the heart.³²

Let us go to the root of the matter, Bolingbroke suggests. The real cause of metaphysical miscalculation is that common human failing, pride. Man is likely to hold a very high opinion of the human mind, "tho it hold, in truth, a very low rank in the intellectual system."³³ Man values his mind so highly that he expects far more complete and perfect knowledge than he finds actually attainable:

Here we may fix the beginning of metaphysics. The ends of their researches were unattainable. Physics could not reach them. But instead of abandoning these objects, philosophers resolved to change their method, to begin where they had hoped in vain to end, and to invent what they had flattered themselves that they should discover. For this purpose, the ideas of Plato were devised, which some imagine to be the same with the numbers of

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Pythagoras. The first strangely absurd, the second quite unintelligible.³⁴

The mistakes of the ancient metaphysicians, of Plato and Pythagoras in particular, are all more or less directly the result of their pride, their over optimistic conception of the human mind. They made what Bolingbroke calls two great apotheoses of folly—a term he found in Bacon.³⁵ The first apotheosis of folly was to imagine ideas, which the mind receives by sensation or reflection,³⁶ to be “eternal essences, incorporeal substances, independent and divine beings that resided in or with the supreme intellect.”³⁷ Bolingbroke offers a fairly complete criticism of the Platonic doctrine of essences. He considers essences as “forms entirely abstracted from matter.”³⁸ He uses the term *abstracted* in the Latin sense, meaning by it drawn away or separated. That which is separated entirely from matter he calls a general nature. Now,

if there were such general natures as are supposed, they would exist in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exist in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exist then no where, whatever Plato might dream, or might say hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real essences for its own use; but that the mind abstracts, even from these creatures of its own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other fictions of the same author, for a philosophical truth.³⁹

Bolingbroke is sure these general natures, or essences, do not exist in the mind because he has examined his own mind, which is essentially the same as other human minds, and found no trace of them. They do not exist

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at all, therefore. Essences are merely general ideas created by the mind for its use and convenience.

Bolingbroke considers even the great empiricist Locke guilty of committing the first apotheosis of folly, for he uses the same criticism of his theory of abstraction, perhaps stating more explicitly his own position:

I am utterly unable to make such abstractions as Mr. Locke and other great masters of reason have taken it for granted that they could and did make. This I know as intuitively and as certainly, as I know that I exist. . . . I am conscious that there is no such power in my mind in any degree, and therefore I conclude, since we are all made of the same clay, a little coarser or a little finer, that there is no such power in their minds. I conclude, after my lord Bacon, that "since abstract ideas have been introduced, and their dignity exalted with so much confidence and authority, the dreaming part of mankind has in a manner prevailed over the waking." If Mr. Locke could dream he had such power as he describes this of abstracting to be (a power to form with "some pains and skill the general idea of a triangle," for instance, "neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once") let writers learn to be less dogmatical, and readers to be less implicit. It is undeniable that there is such a thing as philosophical delirium. Men of the coolest tempers, we see, are liable to be seized by it.⁴⁰

Bolingbroke's criticism here is of a passage⁴¹ taken from Locke's discussion of maxims. This particular passage

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is a kind of digression from the main purpose of the chapter and should be given the weight of *dictum* only. It is in itself, moreover, one of those obscure passages for which Locke is famous. When this passage is interpreted in light of what Locke says in other sections of the *Essay*, where his avowed purpose is the discussion of general terms, it is clear that Bolingbroke is misinterpreting Locke's theory of abstraction. In order to see what Locke means, we must have more of the context before us:

For example, does it not require some pains and skill to form the general ideas of a triangle, . . . for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon; but all and none of these at once. In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist; and ideas wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together.⁴²

Locke goes on to say that the mind makes these general ideas "for the conveniency of communication and enlargement of knowledge."⁴³ The clue to what Locke means in the above passage is the phrase, "some parts of." Locke means that the general idea is made up of the oblique, the equilateral and all other particular triangles. It is in this sense all of these particular triangles. It is in another sense none of the particular triangles because it is made up of only parts of each. In short, Locke believes that a general idea is composed of attributes that are to be found in the individuals to which the general idea is applicable, but that these same individuals have other attributes which are peculiar to themselves as individuals.⁴⁴

The second apotheosis Bolingbroke accuses the met-

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aphysicians of perpetrating is of the human soul, or mind. Pythagoras and Plato considered the soul of divine origin, and they say that it returns to "the soul of the universe" when it departs from the body. Moreover, they thought that it transmigrated from one body to another in order to purge itself of all impurities acquired in its mundane state. By such hypothetical theories as this one, methaphysicians have persuaded themselves that the soul is entirely separate from matter and capable of contemplating eternal essences or even of becoming a part of God. Certainly the second apotheosis, even more than the first, is a symptom of man's inveterate pride.

Most of Bolingbroke's criticism of metaphysics is directed at the Platonists, because he thinks "all our metaphysical writers have rather copied, than improved the platonic systems."⁴⁵ He did, however, offer criticisms also of Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and, as we have seen, Hobbes.

He denounces Aristotle because he "dealt more in common notions than experiments, and built a world with categories, that is by a certain logical arrangement of words."⁴⁶ Moreover, he followed the metaphysical principle of perplexing "what he could not explain," for "he discoursed logically about final causes, to conceal his ignorance of the efficient."⁴⁷ But, worst of all, his theory of the rigid hierarchy of soul—that man is to be distinguished from animal by his rational soul, that animal is to be distinguished from plant by his sensitive soul, and that plant is to be distinguished from stone by its nutritive soul—describes the world as discontinuous. Actually, the world is perfectly continuous, a great chain of being, Bolingbroke tells us.⁴⁸

In general, Bolingbroke thinks Descartes' system too

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elaborate⁴⁹ and based on many hypotheses.⁵⁰ He considers his famous *cogito ergo sum* merely reasoning in a circle: "In the mouth of any other person, 'I think, therefore I am,' would be very near akin to I am, therefore, I am."⁵¹ He repudiates Descartes' assertion that we can know the essence of body and soul.⁵² Cartesian occasionalism—he must be thinking more of Malebranche than Descartes here—he considers ridiculous. If we are Cartesians, for example,

we must say that the passing of Pyrrhus before the old woman's window was the occasion which determined God to make her see him; that on this second occasion, the sight of him, God impressed a sentiment of anger and vengeance in the old woman's soul, God moved her arm to throw the tile; and that on this fourth occasion, the falling of the tile, God broke the skull of this fighting being of Epirus. This extravagant hypothesis would provoke laughter, if it did not provoke horror. . .⁵³

Spinoza and Leibniz he condemns, the former as a materialist, the latter as unintelligible. Spinoza, he says, "acknowledges but one substance, and that matter."⁵⁴ Actually, Spinoza does not acknowledge that the one substance is matter, for he specifically asserts that it is God. What Bolingbroke should have said was that Spinoza did not deny the materiality of God. Leibniz he calls "one of the vainest, and most chimerical men that ever got a name in philosophy who is so often unintelligible that no man ought to believe he understood himself."⁵⁵

The chief reason why metaphysics is a reprehensible discipline is that its methods and doctrines provide the

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clergy with the means to corrupt the natural theology of primitive Christianity:

Metaphysics and tradition, their own whimsies and those of their predecessors, guided the clergy, and constituted their theology. They never considered the word of God naked, if I may say so, nor ever looked at it, except through a theological medium, through which every man might see whatever he had a mind to see in it.⁵⁶

Because of their training in metaphysics divines could not but persuade themselves that the apparent simplicity of the gospel "must be the veil of something more marvellous and more worthy of a revelation";⁵⁷ whereas, it was the very simplicity of the gospel that demonstrated its divine origin. "Thus ignorance and learning conspired to turn the plainest religion that ever was into a chaos of theology, from which it has never been reduced again to a uniform, consistent, and intelligible system. . .⁵⁸

Bolingbroke considers the historical evolution of true Christianity into artificial theology at some length. The corruption of Christianity began as early as the time of the Apostles when the Jewish converts, who were trained in their ancestral cabala and in Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, introduced some of the superstitious customs and institutions of Egypt and the eastern nations.⁵⁹ The contentions and disputes were so general in that early church that, according to St. Jerome, bishops and councils were instituted to maintain order and to decide questions in dispute, but these institutions were so unsuccessful that the differences of opinion and belief continued and remain even to this day undecided "for want of any criterion."⁶⁰

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Not long after the death of Jesus⁶¹ the dominating Paul appeared as a volunteer apostle. Though he was only a recent convert, he soon assumed a pre-eminent position among the disciples, controlling and even reprimanding the most important of them; for they were ignorant, simple men, an easy prey to one skilled in cabalistic interpretation. Paul taught two doctrines which Bolingbroke thinks especially absurd— absolute predestination and unlimited passive obedience.

The Alexandrine school made its contribution to artificial theology during the first five centuries after Christ. Origen, the school's most famous Father, followed an eclectic method of choosing some of the opinions of various sects and philosophies without adopting all of them. Though he was careful in his study of the text of the Scriptures, "he was imbued so strongly with cabalistical and metaphysical notions and habits, that he taught many whimsical doctrines."⁶²

When the ecclesiastical order had become firmly established, the clergy concluded a silent and fraudulent agreement with civil authorities. This agreement was not of the nature of a formal alliance between church and state, as Warburton⁶³ would have it be. The temporal leaders merely admitted tacitly the divine right of the clergy, who in turn "made use of their influence over consciences to establish an opinion of a divine right in them."⁶⁴ As long as it was consistent with ecclesiastical interest, the clergy—even the greatest saints of the church—served and supported the government. Once their interest lay the other way, however, "the most fulsome panegyrist became the most virulent libellers, and they who had preached submission, preached rebellion."⁶⁵ Constantine and other silent partners to this understanding between church and

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state did not foresee to what extent the power of a selfish and rebellious clergy might be used for the aggrandizement of the church. The fact is the church gradually claimed more and more power. First, it claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction, that is, jurisdiction over sins against divine laws. Later it expanded that jurisdiction to include cases involving manners and discipline—two conveniently vague terms. Moreover, sins against God's laws were multiplied as doctrine became more extensive and elaborate. Constantine and his successors were indifferent to doctrines and orthodoxy; they were interested only in maintaining order in the state, and they thought that that could not be effected without uniformity in religious matters. Consequently, they supported the leading faction, even though it meant some loss of civil power.⁶⁶

The authority and importance of the church greatly increased with the improvement of the church's hierarchical system of government. At first—that is, in the days of the apostles—the church government had been democratic in form. No one apostle, technically, had more power than any other. Each had a right to go about preaching the gospel and baptizing converts. Soon, with the institution of bishops and metropolitans the form of government became aristocratic. Later with the establishment of primates and patriarchs the government tended to become monarchical.⁶⁷ Still later when the Bishop of Rome, was recognized as supreme pontiff, the government became imperial.⁶⁸

The promoters of this false religion founded still another institution designed to enhance their prestige. They imitated the stoics by having some men retire from the world to live holy lives as anchorites. A little later—during the fourth century—cenobitic life was

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instituted. In the following century the number of monasteries greatly increased; it was necessary for the ecclesiastical order to atone for their more and more frequent scandals. Before long the monasteries themselves became corrupt, but the ruling powers were always ingenious enough to screen a decayed monastery by founding another one.⁶⁹

By the sixth century, position was sought within the church as zealously as you might expect politicians to seek civil power. Gregory I, for example, would stop at nothing to gain his end of becoming the supreme pontiff of the church. He was, Bolingbroke says, "the most fawning, the most canting, and the most ambitious of priests."⁷⁰ And when he became pope, not content with the present power of the church, he sent St. Augustine to England to subjugate the Britons and Saxons by converting them to a new-fangled Christianity. The Britons, Bolingbroke is proud to say, resisted the pope's usurpations for many centuries, though the Saxons were soon converted.⁷¹

The development of the church traced above, though it is perhaps to be expected as the repetition of the religious cycle to be observed in ancient pagan times,⁷² is hopelessly inconsistent with the intentions of Jesus, who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Jesus came into this world in a lowly rank, not as the mundane Messiah the Jews expected. "He came not to reign, but to redeem, not to triumph, but to suffer; not to erect a kingdom, but to prepare men for that which was to be erected at his second coming."⁷³ In order to redeem mankind, it was necessary for Him not only to live innocent but also to die innocent. And so, far from being the king of the Jews, the Jews had to serve as His crucifier. He effected His purpose very

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cleverly. He managed to appear innocent to the Romans by disclaiming to be the temporal Messiah and at the same time to appear guilty to the Jews because He was not the temporal ruler they had awaited.

The Roman church claims to derive its power directly from Christ, and yet Christ himself claimed no such power as the clergy profess. The pope asserts that his powers emanate from the powers conferred by Jesus on His chief apostle Peter. What, asks Bolingbroke, actually were the powers conferred upon the Apostles, Peter included? They were the power of baptising the believers and "the power of remitting or retaining sins."⁷⁴ Whatever the latter power may be, it is not a power to forgive and cancel sins absolutely; for such a power belongs to Christ alone. These powers are in no sense coercive powers, the kind of powers that a king might delegate:

In short, Christ gave no co-ercive power to his apostles: and they who succeeded them exercised none, till they obtained it, or stole it, from the kings whose kingdoms were of this world. Then, indeed, excommunications grew co-ercive, and severely so: and powers that were tyrannical in their execution, and civil in their origin, began to pass for ecclesiastical and lawful powers, in the hands of men who had no right by their institution to any that are co-ercive or penal.⁷⁵

During the Middle Ages the artificial theology first engrafted into Christianity by the Church Fathers reached its highest esoteric development. The schoolmen, some of whom were men of genius and might have contributed to human knowledge, refined and elaborated the doctrines invented by the Fathers:

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They served, like so many *ignes fatui*, to lead men backwards and forwards through the briars and thorns of vain speculations, within the narrow bounds Aristotle set, as if truth was not to be found out of these. . . They thought that Aristotle had left a most complete and perfect system of philosophy. But they seemed to think that Christ had left an incomplete and imperfect system of religion.⁷⁶

From the schoolmen emerged many theories and opinions which are considered essential doctrines of the church and equivalent to the word of Christ, though they were determined several ages after His death.⁷⁷

Bolingbroke lists some of these doctrines as follows:

the trinity, the coeternity, the coequality, in a word the sameness of the son with the father, the procession of the holy ghost from the father and the son, the fires of purgatory, and the real corporeal presence of Christ in the eucharist.⁷⁸

Since these doctrines first appeared after the death of Christ, they must have been deduced by reason rather than having been taught by revelation. Besides, it can be inferred from the many subsequent disputes over them that they "were not very evidently deduced, nor very accurately collected from the scriptures." In fact, it can be shown that the Scriptures are not more favorable to one doctrine than to its opposite.⁷⁹

Thus the bible becomes a canvass, on which it has been the business of many to dawb, from the time when it was first spread before them. If it was agreed, that some out-lines may have been traced by the original painter: yet would it be manifest, that several particular figures,

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and the composition of the whole system is the work of bungling human pencils.⁸⁰

Thus, the whole fabric of artificial theology has been imposed on superstitious and ignorant men for the sole purpose of erecting an ecclesiastical empire under the autocratic spiritual rule of the pope and his clergy. "This was the effect of that supposed alliance between the church and the state."⁸¹ The religion inculcated by this specious theology taught three duties: first, "to believe what the church believed"; second, to observe all rites and ceremonies instituted by the church; last, and least, to practise morality. The first of these duties was considered absolute; the other two were subject to mitigations—mostly financial—so that, practically speaking no layman who kept up a perfunctory observance of the rites of the church and who had money could fail to save his soul. The special duties which the church enacted were absolute because they were so specific that it was difficult, if not impossible, to explain them away. But moral duties, being general, were subject to individual interpretation. Moreover, the church benevolently admitted that one had to consider human frailty. Indeed, when it was to the church's best interests it was not exceedingly difficult to abrogate morality entirely. For instance, benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues did not apply in the treatment of heretics and excommunicated persons; it was the Christian's duty to exterminate them with great fury.⁸²

To continue the history of Christianity—the scholastic disputes over various doctrines became more and more violent. The church, however, did not interfere as long as those disputes were kept within the circle of the clergy. But the controversy over the reality of

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universals got out of hand. Finally, when Occam, an avowed nominalist, declared that the jurisdiction of the church should be subject to the state, the nominalists were forthwith proclaimed heretics. Although the church survived the crisis brought on by Occam, it did not entirely recover from the more rigorous attack of Wyclif in the fourteenth century, and by the sixteenth century it was powerless to repel the incursions of the Reformation.⁸³

Even the Reformation, however, was not entirely successful. It is true that Luther and Calvin succeeded in abolishing all connection with Rome and in exposing many false and unChristian doctrines; but they and their followers have not been without their prejudices, for they have talked much gibberish. All the reformed churches, for example, proclaim that they have made the word of God their foundation, but how can this be true when there are many reformed churches and only one word of God? The truth is that the reformed churches, like the church of Rome, though to a lesser degree, have called the word of man the word of God. When they opened the Bible and told each man to judge for himself, much the same thing happened that did in the primitive church. The reformers divided themselves into little groups, each following a different interpretation of various crucial passages.

Every teacher had his followers, and some of these affected to preach as well as pray by the spirit. Ambiguous and obscure expressions in the text had the same effect as no text at all, and modern theology broke the uniformity of religion as much as antient, caused as much desolation, and spilled as much blood.

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The reformed churches persecuted one another, and your church persecuted them all.⁸⁴

Every attempt at improving man's religion seems to have failed. First, Jesus himself republished the essence of natural religion, but soon gospel Christianity had turned into Roman Catholicism. Then Calvin and Luther tried to reform Roman Catholicism, but with little success. Can, therefore, nothing be done to remove the stigma of theology? Ideally, Bolingbroke answers, nothing

unless men can be prevailed upon to assume the spirit of christianity as well as the name of Christians, and this will be found, I suppose, impracticable as long as the sole care of religion and the sole direction of conscience is confined every where to a distinct order of men, whose distinct interests and whose passions of course, carry them to keep these dissensions, and feuds alive. If they were content to explain what they understand, to adore what they understand not, to leave in mystery all that Christ and his apostles have left so, to a time that is not yet come, and to teach others to content themselves with natural theology, and such revealed theology as this; the evils spoken of would soon cease, and the scandal consequently.⁸⁵

Such a solution is far from likely. Practically, however, the solution has been found right here in England, where we have followed the principles of good policy by instituting a religion which is national, but, far from claiming to be the ally and striving to be the master of the civil government, is definitely subservient to it.⁸⁶

I have mentioned that an anti-intellectualism and,

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more especially, an anti-clericalism not unlike Bolingbroke's are to be found in the writings of many of the deists. Bolingbroke's anti-intellectualism was not, however, derived primarily from the deists. More than their influence he shows that of the French skeptics, Montaigne and Charron, and of the English empiricists, Bacon and Locke.

The only other deist to show any great influence of Montaigne is Charles Blount. Pierre Villey thinks that in general Blount's intention was the same as Montaigne's: "*Il voulait montrer que les croyances les plus chères sont presque toujours sans fondement.*"⁸⁷ Moreover, Blount shows abundant evidence of specific, even verbal influence of Montaigne.⁸⁸

Bolingbroke respects Montaigne so highly that he compares his creating his essays to Newton's "discovering and establishing the true laws of nature."⁸⁹ He respects him chiefly⁹⁰ because he recognized the weakness of man and of his intellect and the limitations of knowledge. He probably found in Montaigne the theory that animals think, a theory which we have seen he found consistent with his conception of the universe as a chain of being. Indeed, he says that Montaigne

deals with man as divines deal with God, and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raises some other animals so high, that he ascribes a sense of religion to elephants, and represents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the rising sun, and attentive at certain hours of the day to perform certain acts of devotion.⁹¹

Bolingbroke also emphasizes the misery of man after the manner of Montaigne:

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No creature is so miserable, in some descriptions, nor so necessitous as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his state. He grows up, and passes through the human state, exposed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You [Pope] remember no doubt, those five verses in Lucretius.

Tum Porro Puer, ut saevis projectus
abundis . . . ⁹²

Compare this passage with the following from Montaigne:

Nous sommes le seul animal abandonné nud sur la terre unë, lié, garrotté, n'ayant dequoy s'armer et couvrir que de la despoille d'autrui: là où toutes les autres creatures, nature les a garnies de coquilles, de gousses, d'escorse, de poil, de laine . . . selon le besoin de leur estre . . . où l'homme ne scait ny cheminer, ny parler, ny manger, ny rien que pleurer, sans appetissage.⁹³

The passage from Montaigne might have inspired the one from Bolingbroke, though the resemblance is not strikingly close until one reads farther in Montaigne to find the same lines quoted from Lucretius.⁹⁴

Twice Bolingbroke quotes Montaigne in support of his contention that knowledge is necessarily limited:

Altho knowledge acquired facilitates the acquisition of more to a certain point, yet the progress we attempt to make beyond that point grows more and more difficult, and becomes a little sooner, or a little later, quite impracticable; for nothing can be truer in physics, as well as in those general rea-

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sonings which are called metaphysics, than what Montaigne has said, "les extremités de notre perquisition tombent toutes en éblouissement."⁹⁵

In only one particular does Montaigne's skepticism deny a doctrine sacred to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke says:

Sextus Empiricus, an antient, and Montaigne, a modern sceptic collected numerous examples . . . to a very bad purpose; to shew, if they had been able, that there is no such thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They sought it where it is not to be found, and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found nowhere.⁹⁶

I believe Bolingbroke means that Montaigne and other skeptics look for the law of nature in societies where civil and natural law have been confused together. Certainly no uniformity of law can be found thus. One must, rather, determine what every individual man can discover by the use of his reason—*that* is the law of nature.⁹⁷

Bolingbroke also was impressed by the then less well-known⁹⁸ Charron. He writes in a letter to Alari of July 7, 1719, that "Charron . . . avoit, autant d'esprit et plus de sens que son compatriote Montaigne."⁹⁹ Charron has more sense than his predecessor because not only does he recognize the limitations of knowledge but also he realizes the normative value of the law of nature; for he says:

Or le ressort de cette preud'hömie, c'est la loy de nature, c'est à dire l'équité & raison universelle, qui luit & esclaie en un chacun

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de nous. Qui agit par ce ressort, agit selon Dieu: Car cette lumière naturelle est un escalir & rayon de la divinité, une défluxion & dépendence de la loy éternelle & divine. Il agit aussi selon soy, car il agit selon ce qu'il y a de plus noble & de plus riche en soy. Il est homme de bien essentiellement & non par accident & occasion: car cette loy & lumière est essentielle & naturelle en nous, dont aussi est appelée nature & loy de nature.¹⁰⁰

Bolingbroke was certainly influenced by Bacon's criticism of metaphysics; in fact, he mentions Bacon with Montaigne as an opponent of the metaphysical method of Plato:

To separate from what is reasonable and true in this philosophy, all the logical puerilities, all the false sublime, all the tedious and flimsy argumentations that prove nothing, in a word, all that is unintelligible, or that informs us not when it is understood, would be a work something like to that which our Verulam wished to see performed, in one view, and Montaigne in another. . .¹⁰¹

Elsewhere Bolingbroke praises Bacon for attempting to depose Plato and Aristotle, the two great tyrants in philosophy.¹⁰² He also approves of Bacon's attitude towards scholastic logic, which, Bacon says, is not subtle enough to deal with nature.¹⁰³ Bacon is to be valued as the opponent of artificial theology as well as of metaphysics.¹⁰⁴

Bolingbroke, like Toland,¹⁰⁵ is frank in admitting that he follows Locke's epistemology:

I . . . shall content myself to observe, in Mr.

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Locke's method and with his assistance, something about the phaenomena of the human mind, by which we may judge surely of the nature, extent, and reality of human knowledge.¹⁰⁶

He repeats Locke's definition of knowledge as "the perception of the agreement or disagreement, connection or repugnancy of our ideas",¹⁰⁷ and he follows almost exactly the epistemological terminology Locke had used.¹⁰⁸ From Locke he learned, especially, that knowledge is limited, limited because it is dependent ultimately upon our simple ideas of sensation. "We must never lose sight of experience, if we aim at acquiring real knowledge."¹⁰⁹ In other words, we must reason only *a posteriori*.

If only philosophers, Bolingbroke thinks, would follow the lead of Bacon and Locke and be content to limit their discourses to what they can demonstrate by an *a posteriori* use of their reason, and if theologicians would be content to follow the plain and simple teachings of Jesus or to limit themselves to an affirmation of those elements of religion which can be discovered by right reason, the world would be a better place in which to live.

¹ Toland, *Christianity not Mysteriorious*, p. 98.

² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

⁴ Blount, *Religio laici*, p. 25.

⁵ Blount, "The Preface," *Great is Diana* . . .

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁷ Toland, *Nazarenus*, p. 70.

⁸ Collins, *Priestcraft in Perfection* (London, 1710), p. 46.

⁹ Collins, *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 97.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

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- 11 Woolston, *A Fifth Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour* (London, 1728), p. 70.
- 12 Tindal, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-4.
- 13 Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 431.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 432-3.
- 15 Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 57. Morgan's attitude towards St. Paul affords an interesting contrast to Annet's. He writes (*op. cit.*, p. 71), "The Truth is, that St. Paul was the greatest Free-Thinker of his Age, the bold and brave Defender of Reason against Authority, in Opposition to those who had set up a wretched Scheme of Superstition, Blindness and Slavery, contrary to all Reason and Common Sense; and this under the specious, popular Pretence of a divine Institution and Revelation from God." Morgan praises him further (*ibid.*, p. 60) for "his struggling as much as possible for natural Right and Reason, against the Superstition of the Christian *Jews*, and their pretended religious Obligations to the Law of *Moses*."
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 22 Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 188ff.
- 23 Bolingbroke, IV, 376.
- 24 *Ibid.*, IV, 347, 458.
- 25 *Ibid.*, IV, 464, 489.
- 26 *Ibid.*, IV, 451.
- 27 *Ibid.*, III, 327.
- 28 *Ibid.*, IV, 3.
- 29 *Ibid.*, III, 417; see also III, 360; IV, 129, 159; V, 242, 347.
- 30 *Ibid.*, V, 449.
- 31 *Ibid.*, III, 455.
- 32 *Ibid.*, III, 318.
- 33 *Ibid.*, III, 328.
- 34 *Ibid.*, IV, 475; see also IV, 480. In a footnote on the former page Bolingbroke refers in an abbreviated form to Johann Jacobs Brucher, *Scediasma historico-philosophicum de conventientia numerorum Pythagorae cum ideis Platonis* (London, 1727), which may be the source of his comparison of the ideas of Plato with the numbers of Pythagoras.
- 35 Cf. Bolingbroke, IV, 127, with Francis Bacon, *Opera Omnia* (London, 1730), II, 260.

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- 36 Bolingbroke accepts unquestionably most of Locke's epistemological terminology.
- 37 Bolingbroke, IV, 127.
- 38 *Ibid.*, III, 399.
- 39 *Ibid.*, V, 27-8.
- 40 *Ibid.*, III, 441-2.
- 41 Berkeley selects the same passage for attack, using virtually the same argument as Bolingbroke. Berkeley may be the source of Bolingbroke's criticism.
- 42 John Locke, *op. cit.*, II, 274.
- 43 *Ibid.*, II, 275.
- 44 See Fraser's annotations in the edition cited above (II, 274).
- 45 Bolingbroke, V, 449.
- 46 *Ibid.*, III, 391-2, 383-4, 403, 443; IV, 108, 129-30, 340, 357-8, 612-13.
- 47 *Ibid.*, III, 404.
- 48 *Ibid.*, III, 530ff.
- 49 *Ibid.*, III, 538.
- 50 *Ibid.*, III, 499, 541.
- 51 *Ibid.*, III, 365.
- 52 *Ibid.*, III, 507ff.
- 53 *Ibid.*, III, 541.
- 54 *Ibid.*, III, 503.
- 55 *Ibid.*, III, 329.
- 56 *Ibid.*, IV, 586.
- 57 *Ibid.*, V, 451; see also IV, 294.
- 58 *Ibid.*, IV, 458.
- 59 *Ibid.*, IV, 450, 457-8.
- 60 *Ibid.*, IV, 459.
- 61 For Bolingbroke's discussion of Jesus see Chapter IX.
- 62 Bolingbroke, IV, 462.
- 63 For a discussion of Bolingbroke's reading of Warburton see the Appendix.
- 64 Bolingbroke, IV, 516.
- 65 *Ibid.*, IV, 516.
- 66 *Ibid.*, IV, 517-8.
- 67 *Ibid.*, IV, 519-20.
- 68 *Ibid.*, IV, 548.
- 69 *Ibid.*, IV, 522ff.
- 70 *Ibid.*, IV, 529.
- 71 *Ibid.*, IV, 534ff.

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- 72 Bolingbroke writes (IV, 524-5): "Thus have things continued to the present age: and the religious society, among Christians, has imitated successfully the policy of religious societies that flourished, above three thousand years ago, in the pagan world. You must not be surprised at this assertion. It is easy to shew, that the vast variety of religions, which prevail in the world, are derived ultimately from a few general principles, common to all men, because they arise from the common fund of human nature: and that in consequence of this, many rites and ceremonies, many institutions and orders, must descend, sometimes with more and sometimes with less affinity, to the latest posterity." For more evidence that Bolingbroke holds a cyclical conception of history see IV, 235-6 and III, 270.
- 73 *Ibid.*, IV, 537.
- 74 *Ibid.*, IV, 542.
- 75 *Ibid.*, IV, 544.
- 76 *Ibid.*, IV, 616.
- 77 *Ibid.*, IV, 617ff.
- 78 *Ibid.*, IV, 618.
- 79 *Ibid.*, IV, 619.
- 80 *Ibid.*, IV, 274.
- 81 *Ibid.*, IV, 621-2.
- 82 *Ibid.*, IV, 622-3.
- 83 *Ibid.*, IV, 624.
- 84 *Ibid.*, IV, 629.
- 85 *Ibid.*, IV, 629.
- 86 *Ibid.*, IV, 630-1. Bolingbroke's conclusion is anticlimactically conservative.
- 87 Pierre Villey, "L'influence de Montaigne sur Charles Blount et sur les déistes anglais," *Revue du seizième siècle*, I (1913), 202.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp. 191ff.
- 89 Bolingbroke, III, 15.
- 90 Bolingbroke may have respected Montaigne partly because, like himself, Montaigne was a gentleman who wrote during his leisure time and who scorned professional scholars.
- 91 Bolingbroke, V, 324.
- 92 *Ibid.*, V, 323.
- 93 Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais*, I. Motheau and D. Jouaust, edd. (Paris, 1887), III, 199-200.
- 94 Villey, (*op. cit.*, p. 438) suggests the comparison of these passages.
- 95 Bolingbroke, III, 390; see also V, 477.
- 96 *Ibid.*, V, 101; see also V, 104.

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- 97 Montaigne's attitude towards the law of nature would not have been inconsistent with the theory Bolingbroke develops in the *Reflections* . . .
- 98 Though the English translation of *La Sagesse, Of Wisdom*, was available to eighteenth-century readers in five seventeenth-century editions, it was, according to the British Museum Catalogue, last reprinted in 1707. If we are to judge by the men of letters, it was not in much demand in the eighteenth century; for there is no mention of Charron in the works of Swift, Smollett, Stern, *et al.* Even Pope, who speaks of Charron as "more sage" than Montaigne, did not, according to Audra (*op. cit.*, pp. 461ff.), read him, though he knew something about him from Bolingbroke.
- 99 Bolingbroke, *Lettres* . . . , III, 33.
- 100 Pierre Charron, *La Sagesse* (Paris, 1672), p. 301.
- 101 Bolingbroke, IV, 355.
- 102 *Ibid.*, IV, 161.
- 103 *Ibid.*, IV, 108.
- 104 *Ibid.*, IV, 607 in footnote.
Toland and Bolingbroke are the only two deists influenced by Locke to any extent, though Tindal and Morgan pay homage to the great philosopher. Hefelbower thinks that Locke did not influence the deists except superficially. (*op. cit.*, pp. 154ff.; for summary see p. 170).
- 105 Toland, *Christianity not Mysteriorious*, p. 83.
- 106 Bolingbroke, III, 378; *cf.* Locke, *Essay* . . . , II, 167.
- 107 *Ibid.*, III, 378; *cf.* Locke, *Essay* . . . , II, 167.
- 108 *Ibid.*, III, 362ff.
- 109 *Ibid.*, III, 410.

CHAPTER IX

Criticism of Revelation

A RATIONALISTIC criticism of revelation is the most important aspect of negative deism. It, perhaps more than anything else, distinguishes the deist from his orthodox contemporaries. Hefelbower says, "If you know a man's attitude towards revelation, you can classify him quite accurately."¹

The deistic attack on revelation, like the other phases of negative deism, is based ultimately upon the uniformitarian conception of reason. Natural religion they considered unquestionably valid, because it passed the test of universality, being discoverable to all men by the right use of reason. Revelation, however, is immediately suspect, for it is universal neither in time nor place. Moreover, the phenomenon of revelation is inconsistent with the deists' conception of God. A perfectly powerful and wise God would not create a world which required his future intercession by word any more than by act.

In spite of revelation's being incompatible with the fundamental tenets of deism, the deists as a group accept the possibility of revelation, only questioning how one can know whether an alleged revelation is valid. Herbert, for example, says specifically that "revealed truth exists," though he limits the conditions under which it is possible as follows: (1) Prayers and vows must be employed by the faithful as a prere-

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quisite; (2) It "must be given directly to some person"; (3) It must recommend some good course of action; (4) the "breath of the Divine Spirit must be immediately felt."² Most important of these conditions is the second. Herbert considered revelation real only to the one who first received it. Blount, in general, follows Herbert, questioning whether it is necessary for a man to accept what was revealed to another. He also says revelation is not necessary to man's future happiness because anything necessary to future happiness must be knowable by all men, and revelation is not:

That Rule which is necessary to our future Happiness, ought to be generally made known to all men.

But no Rule of Revealed Religion was, or ever could be made known to all men.

Therefore no Revealed Religion is necessary to future Happiness.³

The deists' attitude towards revelation was undoubtedly influenced by Locke, whose *Reasonableness of Christianity* was published just a year before Toland's *Christianity not Mysteriorious*. Though Locke's conclusions were orthodox (that revelation supplements reason, providing us with many doctrines and truths not discoverable by reason), his emphasis on the importance of reason as the faculty by which revelation is discovered and interpreted stimulated the deists' more radical theories. His statement of the distinction between what is contrary to reason and what is above it also influenced them. He said that revelation may contain what is above but not what is contrary to reason.⁴

Toland in his *Christianity not Mysteriorious* agreed with

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Locke that revelation is possible, but he denied that it could contain anything that is above reason:

On the contrary, we hold that *Reason* is the only Foundation of all certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its *Manner* or *Existence*, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain . . . *that there is Nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, or above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery.*⁵

Toland even says that we must interpret the Scriptures in the same way we would interpret any other book.⁶

Tindal distinguished two types of revelation—internal and external. The former is that which is revealed to every man by the light of his nature, or reason; in other words, it is the law of nature. The latter is what is given by God to man, especially in the Bible.⁷ Inasmuch as the internal revelation which is perfectly complete containing all man's necessary moral duties, precedes external revelation, the Bible can be nothing more than a republication of the law of nature. It would be inconsistent with God's attribute of unchangeableness for Him to make first one revelation to every man through the light of His nature, and then to make a different revelation to a certain chosen group of men.⁸ It would, moreover, be incompatible with God's goodness for Him to neglect man for four thousand years and then to help only some men:

And if the Necessities of mankind have always been as great, and the goodness of God always the same; wou'd not these oblige him to have prescrib'd an immediate Remedy to the Disease, and not deferr'd it for four thousand

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Years together; and then apply'd it but to
a few, tho' all had equal Need of it?⁹

Tindal's conclusion is implicit in the title of his book. *Christianity*, in so far as it is consistent with the law of nature, is *as old as creation*. The title, however, is a little misleading, because Tindal does not merely affirm the perfection of Christianity. In fact, he is very critical of the revelation of the Old Testament and not entirely in agreement with that of the New Testament. Both, he says, must be read critically, so that they can be interpreted or denied on the basis of reason and the law of nature.¹⁰

Morgan follows Herbert and Blount in emphasizing the necessity that revelation be directly from God to man:

If God speaks to me immediately and directly, I believe him upon his own Authority without any human Interpositions; but if a Man speaks to me as from God, I must take his Word for it, unless he could prove to me the natural Reasonableness or Fitness of the Thing, and then I should take it, indeed, as coming from God, but not upon any human Authority at all. In a Word there can be no such Thing as divine Faith upon human Testimony, and this absurd Supposition has been the Ground of all the Superstition and false Religion in the World.¹¹

Morgan accepts the revelation of the New Testament as rational and, therefore, from God.¹² Indeed, he calls himself a Christian deist, one who believes that the Christianity of the New Testament is a revival of natural religion.¹³ The revelation of the Old Testament, however, he denies as "founded in the Principles of

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Persecution, in which Idolatry was to be exterminated, and Idolaters destroyed by Fire and Sword."¹⁴

Annet is perhaps the most outspoken of all the deists in his attack on revelation. In effect, he denies revelation in general and revelation of the Scriptures in particular. He thinks that all revelation which cannot withstand the scrutiny of reason should be rejected, and he is sure that no revelation can. Since it is impossible really to know anything through revelation without the use of reason, "Revelation is *no true Light at all*."¹⁵ He, like Herbert, Blount, and Tindal, recognized the danger of depending on traditional evidence of revelation:

Why must we confide in those that have handed Stories down to us, who in their own Time where not to be believed for their Knavery? When Stories look more like Romance than Truth, where is the Crime for taking them for what they appear to be? or where is the Wisdom or Virtue of receiving them as Truth? What can better discover the True Value of Things than their own intrinsic Worth?¹⁶

Annet suggests analyzing the Scriptures as we would any history. What authority have we to demonstrate their validity? Only the Scriptures themselves.

Therefore proving Facts by the Book, which must be taken to be true, do not prove the Truth of those Facts, no more than they prove the Truth of the Doctrines therein contained, if there are Circumstances of Suspicion in one, or Reason is against the other, however the one may be set forth, or the other defended.¹⁷

Actually "the Christian Tradition is the least of all Histories to be regarded for genuine and uncorrupted

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Truth." We could as easily prove *Robinson Crusoe* a true history as to prove the Bible such.¹⁸

Chubb follows Tindal in suggesting that it is repugnant to our conception of God to say that revelation is a necessary supplement to reason.¹⁹ If it is such, then the men who lived prior to the revelation have been unfairly treated; for they have been held accountable for that which they can in no way understand. A wise and good God would not judge man by a standard to which he did not have access.²⁰ Specifically,

Reason is a judge in matters of revelation, in these four respects. *First*, of the *internal* characters of a revelation, whether they are *worthy* of God. And, *secondly*, of the *external* evidence which attends a revelation, whether it sufficiently *proves* that it came from God. . . *Thirdly*, Reason is, or *ought to be* a proper judge of the *sense* and *meaning* of divine revelation; because otherwise divine revelation may become very *hurtful* to us. And which by the way shew, that *reason* or the *reason* of things, is a rule of action *prior* to that of revelation. Again, *fourthly* and *lastly*, Reason *is*, or *ought to be*, a proper judge of *every part* of that revelation, of which it is said that it is divine; because divinely inspired men may *pretend* to be so, when that is not the case. . .²¹

Bolingbroke's criticism of revelation, in general, resembles Tindal's, though he offers a more complete critique of the revelation of the Old Testament than Tindal or any of the other deists. The Pentateuch, in particular, he examines at some length. Moses'

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authorship of these books he does not question, nor does he doubt their great antiquity. But even admitting Moses to be the most ancient of historians, he thinks the authenticity of the books he wrote must be questioned, because he wrote as much as twenty-five centuries after the events alleged in Genesis. Tillotson suggests that the work of Moses should be examined as that of any other historian. Bolingbroke follows this suggestion by setting up a series of criteria whereby he thinks it possible to judge of the authenticity of any history. In the first place, a history must be written "by a contemporary author, or one who had contemporary materials in his hands." Obviously, Moses does not satisfy this first criterion. Secondly, "It must have been published among men who were able to judge of the capacity of the author, and of the authenticity of the memorials on which he writ."²² There is no proof that the Pentateuch was published among the contemporaries or immediate successors of Moses. It is true that the law of Moses and many of the facts related in the Pentateuch are mentioned by the authors of succeeding books of the Old Testament. But such knowledge as they display could have been acquired from oral tradition. Thirdly, a history cannot contain anything "repugnant to the experience of mankind." It may be adduced that many accepted historians, Livy, for example, assert things incompatible with human experience. In the case of these histories, however, the incredible elements are merely incidental; the histories may be read without regard to them. But the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old Testament are dependent upon these very incredible elements: "The whole history is founded on such, it consists of little else,

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and if it were not an history of them, it would be an history of nothing.”²³ Indeed, says Bolingbroke,

when I sit down to read this history with the same indifference as I should read any other, for so it ought to be read, . . . I am ready to think myself transported into a sort of fairy-land, where every thing is done by magic and enchantment; where a system of nature, very different from ours, prevails; and all I meet with is repugnant to my experience, and to the clearest and most distinct ideas I have.²⁴

The next condition necessary for historical authenticity is that the essential facts of the history be substantiated by “collateral testimony”—that is, by the testimony of impartial witnesses. Josephus introduces many witnesses to corroborate the history of Moses, Manetho and Eusebius among them; but these witnesses must be disqualified, because one of their chief intentions was to authenticate the Old Testament. Bolingbroke admits that it may be possible to demonstrate by collateral confirmation that the five books in question contain very ancient traditions and that there was a leader of the Israelites by the name of Moses. Yet he does not think it possible to prove that Moses was divinely inspired, “conversed with the supreme Being face to face.” Thus, the authenticity of the books of Moses and the other books of the Old Testament does not rest on sufficient collateral evidence.²⁵ Some defenders of the Old Testament would say that the relics and ceremonies which continued long after the time of the Jews take the place of collateral evidence. Actually, Bolingbroke says, the alleged relics exist only in the very books the authenticity of which we are attempting to prove. Even if they did exist, we should have to re-

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ject them as the production of fraud and trickery. Ceremonies would be as poor evidence, for they might well be the result of fabulous traditions.²⁶

Some divines who are less liberal than Tillotson assert that the Old Testament is not to be considered as a history at all, but that it is of divine authority because it was written by men who were immediately inspired by God.

But all this will not amount to proof, unless it may be said, that they who cannot give to this history even the appearance of human, can give it the appearance of divine authenticity.²⁷

Failing to establish the authenticity of the Old Testament by external evidence, divines have sought to establish it by internal, by pointing out marks of its divine origin. What do they mean by marks of its divine origin? They must mean that the books of the Old Testament are more perfect as books of history or of law "than any other writings that are avowedly human."²⁸ Certainly nothing could be more false, Bolingbroke assures us. We have considered already their imperfection as history. As law, the teachings of the Old Testament were sufficient to keep law and order among the Israelites themselves, but even bands of outlaws would have laws to do as much. This law, however, was painfully insufficient to regulate their conduct towards people of other nations. Far from law of nature, the law of Moses was entirely selfish in tendency. The Israelites thought of themselves as the chosen people and, therefore, of other peoples as inferior and not worthy of being treated as equals.

This produced a legal injustice and cruelty in their whole conduct, and there is no part

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of their history wherein we shall not find examples of both, authorised by their law, and pressed upon them by their priests and their prophets.²⁹

In contrast to the Jewish law is the teaching of many pagan philosophers that general benevolence should be observed by all men even towards foreign societies.

In order to enforce his supposedly divine law Moses found it necessary to promise his people rewards and threaten them with punishments. Never did he ask them to do good for its own sake, but always for some ulterior and selfish end. A good law, even though not divine should operate efficiently; surely none was ever less efficient in operation than the law of Moses. Another perfection to be looked for in a good law is precision and clearness in its terms. This the Jewish law, with its loose and equivocal language, certainly lacked.

In human laws, according to Bolingbroke, defects and falsities are to be expected.

But any one defect, any one falsity, or mistake, is sufficient to shew the fraud and imposture of writings that pretend to contain the infallible word of God. Now there are gross defects, and palpable falshoods, in almost every page of the scriptures, and the whole tenor of them is such as no man, who acknowledges a supreme, all-perfect Being, can believe it to be his word.³⁰

Not only is the law of Moses imperfect, but the very facts alleged, for example, in Genesis, are impossible. God created the material world, and then when it was time to create man, he called for the help of other beings, for he said, "Let us make man in our image." Bolingbroke is shocked: "This seems to lay a founda-

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tion for polytheism, and I am startled at it, because it is inconsistent with that unity of the Godhead which my reason shews me. . .³¹ To account for this passage as a reference to the trinity is no help, for the trinity is an irrational doctrine conjured up by modern theology. Moreover, Moses shows that he is not even familiar with the true system of the universe, for he has given an absurd account of the creation of man's physical and moral system.

The ignorance and errors to be found in his writings indicate that Moses was not divinely inspired. Moreover, his unworthy, inconsistent, confused notions of the Creator show that he was not even familiar with the true God. Moses has God make the world and man and then has Him repent of his action because of Adam's sin, a sin which He could easily "have prevented by a little less indulgence to, what is called, free will."³² Later on, the God of Moses repents again and decides to flood the world and drown all but a few selected creatures. When the flood was over and God smelled the tempting savor of an offering burning on Noah's altar, He repented a third time and determined not to afflict the ground any more for the sake of man. Then He made a covenant with Noah and his family, promising not to drown the earth again. Generations later God made another covenant, this time with Abraham, promising "to be the tutelary God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." A just God would not have preferred Jacob to Esau and have chosen the Israelites, descendants of Jacob, in preference to the Edomites, descendants of Esau. In short, "the whole history, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to the Exode, is a series of tales that would appear fit to amuse Children alone, if they were found in any other book."³³

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Really what Bolingbroke most objects to in the Mosaic revelation is its lack of universality. It was a revelation known only to one people, the descendants of Jacob, whom God had chosen more or less arbitrarily. Naturally so esoteric a revelation would not impress a deist like Bolingbroke as authentic, for he thought that the fundamental requirement of any valid religion was universality. Natural religion, he has said, is valid because it could be known by all men.

Bolingbroke is shocked that Locke, the philosopher he most admires,³⁴ accepts the Jewish revelation without question, asserting not only that the Israelites were the chosen people but also that they were the only pre-Christian nation to believe in and worship the one true God.³⁵ Although other nations could have discovered God through His works—for Locke admits that God can be ascertained by reason alone—"yet the world made so little use of their reason, that they saw him not, where, even by the impressions of himself he was easy to be found. Sense and lust blinded their minds. . . ."³⁶ Bolingbroke tries to be patient with Locke, for "there is a respect due even to the mistakes of that great man."³⁷ First of all, he accuses Locke of failing to distinguish between the lack of sufficient means to reclaim the masses from idolatry and polytheism and the lack of means to discover the true God³⁸—an accusation that is hardly fair because Locke clearly recognizes that it is possible to discover God rationally. Secondly, he says Locke does not differentiate between the terms *true God* and *one God*. Bolingbroke thinks this is an important distinction because "it is not unity alone that constitutes the complex idea, or notion of the true God."³⁹ Of course, the true God is one, but it is possible for a polytheist to come closer to

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believing in the true God than some monotheists do. For example, a heathen polytheist, like Socrates, who believed that one God was supreme, superior to all other gods,⁴⁰ comes nearer believing in the true God than a monotheist who ascribes to his God "the very worst human imperfections"⁴¹—perhaps Bolingbroke refers to the monotheist of the Pentateuch.

Moreover, Bolingbroke believes there is historical evidence—here he has a somewhat less rigorous conception of what constitutes historical authenticity than he insisted on in examining the Pentateuch as a history—of heathen belief in the true God. He says that belief in one Supreme Being must have been extant at an early period in Egypt because the first Greek philosophers who went to Egypt to study brought back such a belief.⁴² The Jesuits tell us that the ancient Chinese, during an age which would have looked upon Moses as a modern historian, worshipped one supreme God.⁴³

Bolingbroke attempts to reduce Locke's contention that the true God was unknown in heathen times, to absurdity:

Locke might have asserted just as truly, that no men but the Jews knew how to read and write, before the coming of Christ, because many of them knew it ill, as they do to this day, and some of them did not know it at all.⁴⁴

Bolingbroke's attitude towards the revelation of the New Testament—especially of the Gospel—is quite different from his attitude towards that of the Old Testament. We have seen that he considers the Gospel simple and plain, an approximation of the religion of nature.

He objects strongly, however, to the central doctrine

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of the New Testament, the redemption; far from being "honorable and worthy" of God as Clarke says it is, he considers it one of "the most absurd notions which superstition ever spread, in contradiction to the law of nature and reason."⁴⁵ Let's see if it is:

The heathens thought, that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for sins. Therefore, it is plainly agreeable to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by man, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger.⁴⁶

Bolinbroke goes on to use his favorite device by reducing the doctrine to absurdity. He says that he does not approve of comparing the divine to the human methods of doing things, but that for the moment he would like to make an argument *ad hominem*:

Let us suppose then, a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to punish, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only and beloved son to be put to death to expiate their sins, and to satisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say that it would, except he be a divine; for Clarke does in effect say that it would; since he imputes this very proceeding to God, and justifies it not implicitly on the authority of revelation, but explicitly on the authority of reason which may be applied to man as well

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as to God, and as a particular instance of the general rule that is, according to him, common to both.⁴⁷

Clarke plays into Bolingbroke's hand by calling the doctrine reasonable just the way Tillotson had done by calling the Pentateuch a history.

When Bolingbroke speaks of revelation in general, he refers to Christian rather than Jewish revelation. He thinks that if any revelation is valid, other than the certain revelation to be found in God's works (what Tindal calls internal revelation), it is the revelation of Christ. He agrees with the early deists, however, that the authority of this revelation has been greatly diminished by time, whereas the authority of reason continues:

Revelation descends like a torrent, and bears down all before it, whilst the tradition of it is fresh and strong. But this force diminishes gradually; the stream grows feeble, and ceases at last to run, by a necessity arising from the nature of things. The stream whereof reason is the source, may be obstructed in it's course. It may creep scarce perceived in the same channels, or it may disappear entirely; but when it rolls no longer on the surface, it runs under ground, and is ever ready to break out anew.⁴⁸

Bolingbroke thinks the authority of revelation has also been mitigated by the way in which it has been propagated.⁴⁹

Bolingbroke is not always certain that revelation descended like a torrent even in the early Christian days. He has said that even the stupendous miracles accompanying the revelation were not sufficient to con-

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vince all of Jesus' contemporaries of the divinity of His gospel. Indeed, the early Christian preachers—Paul among them—appealed primarily to the reason of their listeners.⁵⁰ Thus, "the means employed to establish and maintain the gospel have not been sufficient to do it independently of reason, and by the mere force of authority, from the first publication of it."⁵¹

If the prerogative of reason to determine the validity of revelation was established even during the time of the first promulgation of it, what should be our procedure in examining that revelation today? Divines say that we should study the external and internal evidences of it. Bolingbroke agrees with them that it is necessary to study the external evidence, though he is not certain about the advisability of examining the internal:

It seems to me, that divines should rest the authority both of the old and new testament on the proofs they are able to bring of their divine original, and of the uncorrupt manner in which they have been conveyed down to latter ages, solely.⁵²

Once the divine original of the Scriptures is established in this manner, "it is both impertinent and prophane to pretend to confirm divine testimony, by shewing that there is reason to believe it true."⁵³

How, in fact, do divines go about establishing an external proof of revelation? A Catholic priest says, in effect, that the authority of the church is sufficient external evidence of the divinity of the Christian revelation. An Anglican divine, though he admits that we have a right to examine for ourselves the external evidence, says we should be safe in trusting to the authority of "so many pious, judicious, and learned men as have made it the business of their lives to

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examine the testimonies of this revelation, and have agreed to affirm the validity of it.”⁵⁴ Clarke, for example, does not emphasize any external proof, merely referring to a list of profane historians who confirm sacred history, “and yet the least grain of such proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problematical and futile reasoning, that has been so tediously employed to give some color to” internal evidence.⁵⁵

All divines must admit that the validity of the external evidence has been mitigated by time, that the divinity of the Christian revelation is not so certain as it may once have been. They blame this diminution on “the loss of many proofs, whereof time and accidents have deprived us.”⁵⁶ But, says Bolingbroke, the external evidence would have been no more convincing if we had all these proofs. “We should be puzzled as much by contradictory, as we are by scanty, proofs.”⁵⁷ Indeed, since the ancient authors whom we might use for testimony can be restored only as a result of much critical emendation and many various readings, how could we ever be certain of our proof?

Locke suggests to Bolingbroke the comparison of methods of proof used by courts of justice with those used by divines. In court, Locke says, proof can be made only by the original record or an attested copy of it.⁵⁸ Divines, however, make their so-called proofs by means of records which are very remote copies of the original. Some would defend the procedure of divines because it is not possible for them to procure original records or attested copies of the materials with which they are concerned. But, Bolingbroke observes,

if it be reasonable to take such a precaution in matters that concern private property, and wherein the sum of ten pounds may not be at

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stake, how much more reasonable is it to neglect no precaution that can be taken, to assure ourselves that we receive nothing for the word of God, which is not sufficiently attested to be so.⁵⁹

The original record or attested copy is not demanded by the court solely because it is available, but because it is thought proof is impossible without direct evidence. When the authenticity of the Christian revelation is judged, indirect evidence should not be said to constitute a proof merely because direct evidence is difficult or impossible to obtain. Without direct evidence there is no proof. Divines, Bolingbroke suggests, "would do better, perhaps, if they trusted, more to grace and faith . . . and less to their own skill."⁶⁰

Although Bolingbroke has urged divines to expend their effort establishing an external proof of revelation (perhaps he does this partly because he thinks such a proof is impossible), he says that the prerogative of reason extends to internal evidence also; for "the credit of a revelation will not support itself on the other alone."⁶¹ Some divines say that "the very style of the scriptures"—the combination of sublimity and simplicity—is ample evidence of their divine origin. But, says Bolingbroke, the same simplicity and the same sublimity can be found in many profane writings. Divines, in general,⁶² go on at great length talking about their feigned internal evidences as though they were as familiar with the divine mind and manner of doing things as they are with their own. Their method alone is such that it shocks one who might be willing to be persuaded by cogent external proof. All that they have to say about internal evidence are merely "amplifications and conjectures."⁶³

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Nevertheless, one should rationally examine the Scriptures themselves to find a negative if not a positive proof. One should determine whether there is some sort of "conformity to the general experience of mankind" and, more important, whether there is "a conformity to all we know of the Supreme Being, and of the law of our nature"; for "if any one thing repugnant to this knowledge be found in any history, or system of doctrine, they ought to be rejected, whatever proofs external or internal they may boast of a divine original."⁶⁴ When any revelation has satisfied these conditions, it "is to be received with the most profound reverence, the most intire submission, and the most unfeigned thanksgiving."⁶⁵ It is then that faith may rightfully take over, for reason will have completely exercised her prerogative.

In the last analysis, Bolingbroke's criticism of Christian revelation is the same as his criticism of Jewish revelation. It lacks universality:⁶⁶

It is repugnant to all the ideas of wisdom and goodness to believe that the universal terms of salvation are knowable by the means of one order of men alone [whether Jewish or Christian], and that they continue to be so even after they have been published to all nations.⁶⁷

The true revelation should be universal both as to time and place. It is absurd to assume, as one who accepts the Christian revelation must, that, "mankind stood in more need of a revelation four thousand years after their race began, than at any other period."⁶⁸ The only way the Christian or Jewish revelation can be made universal is for it to pass reason's most rigid examination. Bolingbroke agrees with Tindal: there can be nothing contrary to nor above reason in an

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authentic revelation.⁶⁹ The implication is that since there is much that is both contrary to and supposedly above reason in the Jewish and the Christian revelations, they must be rejected.

Bolingbroke seldom implies so radical a conclusion, however. We have heard him praise gospel Christianity as simple and plain, as virtually a republication of the religion of nature.⁷⁰ He does say, moreover, that "no religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind."⁷¹ Clearly consistency is not one of Bolingbroke's chief virtues.

¹ Hefelbower, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

² Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

³ Blount, *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 198.

⁴ Locke, *Essay . . .*, II, 423ff.

⁵ Toland, *Christianity not Mysteriorious*, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷ Tindal, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 115, 255.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 225ff., 23.

¹¹ Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁵ Annet, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁹ Chubb, *A Discourse concerning Reason . . .*, p. 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

²² Bolingbroke, III, 275.

²³ *Ibid.*, III, 279.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 280.

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- 25 Bolingbroke, III, 281-4.
- 26 *Ibid.*, III, 284-5.
- 27 *Ibid.*, III, 287.
- 28 *Ibid.*, III, 290.
- 29 *Ibid.*, III, 290.
- 30 *Ibid.*, III, 298.
- 31 *Ibid.*, III, 300.
- 32 *Ibid.*, III, 301-2.
- 33 *Ibid.*, III, 304.
- 34 Hefelbower is mistaken in saying that Locke is the philosopher Bolingbroke "criticizes most" (*op. cit.*, p. 165). Bolingbroke does criticize his theology, but he praises his epistemology. The philosopher he criticizes most, I should think, is Plato.
- 35 Locke, *Works*, VII, 136.
- 36 *Ibid.*, VII, 135.
- 37 Bolingbroke, V, 191.
- 38 *Ibid.*, IV, 191.
- 39 *Ibid.*, IV, 191.
- 40 Bolingbroke says (IV, 193) that Locke errs in thinking that Socrates opposed the polytheism of his times; he merely tried to reform it.
- 41 *Ibid.*, IV, 192.
- 42 *Ibid.*, IV, 198.
- 43 *Ibid.*, IV, 206ff.
- 44 *Ibid.*, IV, 203.
- 45 *Ibid.*, V, 286.
- 46 *Ibid.*, V, 287.
- 47 *Ibid.*, V, 289-90.
- 48 *Ibid.*, IV, 235; see IV, 276-7.
- 49 *Ibid.*, V, 268. See also Chapter VIII of this book.
- 50 *Ibid.*, IV, 261ff. See also Chapter III above.
- 51 *Ibid.*, IV, 263.
- 52 *Ibid.*, IV, 226.
- 53 *Ibid.*, IV, 227.
- 54 *Ibid.*, IV, 269.
- 55 *Ibid.*, V, 302-3.
- 56 *Ibid.*, IV, 269.
- 57 *Ibid.*, IV, 269-70.
- 58 Locke, *Essay* . . . , II, 377ff.
- 59 Bolingbroke, IV, 271.
- 60 *Ibid.*, IV, 272.
- 61 *Ibid.*, IV, 273.

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- ⁶² Bolingbroke discusses the internal evidences only in general terms.
- ⁶³ Bolingbroke, IV, 274.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 275-6.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 279. Bolingbroke's attitude towards revelation clarifies his doctrine of immortality, for he says (V, 488) that doctrine "must stand on the bottom of revelation or on none." Therefore, immortality is a valid doctrine only if the revelation which asserts it is authentic, and Bolingbroke does not consider it authentic.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 295.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 337.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 285.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 546.
- ⁷⁰ He also denies that Christianity is a republication of the law of nature: "I will not say that christianity is a republication of it." (*Ibid.*, IV, 282).
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 282.

Conclusion

BOLINGBROKE, perhaps more clearly than any other deist, bases his positive deism on his conception of God. He uses the teleological argument, the one most commonly used by the deists, to prove God's existence. He affirms the natural attributes, power and wisdom, because he considers them clearly demonstrated in God's works. The moral attributes, goodness and justice, he thinks less certainly evident in nature, though he does not deny that God is in some sense good and just. The moral attributes he sometimes describes as absorbed in God's wisdom, and sometimes he seems to deny them altogether. Bolingbroke's discussion of the attributes is really more complete than that of any other deist, though Collins has written a short treatise on the *Vindication of the Divine Attributes*.

Bolingbroke also develops a more complete theory of Providence than any other deist. He, Chubb, and Annet are the only ones to state a theory which is consistent with the general conception of deism. Most of the deists either ignore the matter or accept the orthodox notion of particular Providence, not realizing that that doctrine is inconsistent with a denial of miracles and revelation. Bolingbroke, however, denies particular Providence, asserting that God governs the world merely by general Providence.

Bolingbroke follows earlier deists in denying the evidential value of miracles. He is more extreme than Herbert, Blount, Toland, Tindal, Chubb, and Dodwell, in

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his animadversions of the actuality of miracles. Like Annet and Middleton, he is inclined to deny the fact of miracles.

Bolingbroke lays more emphasis on an optimistic conception of the world than do the other deists. This optimism he derives *a priori* from the natural attributes of God. A perfectly powerful and wise God would not create any but the best of possible worlds. Like King, he solves the problem of evil in two ways: by denying the alleged prevalence of so-called evil in the world and by explaining that what appears to be evil is good from the point of view of the whole.

Along with Collins, and like him basing his reasoning on Locke's dictum that the immateriality of the soul cannot be proved, Bolingbroke denies that the immortality of the soul, and, consequently, the doctrine of future rewards and punishment, can be proved. Herbert, Blount, Tindal, and Morgan—in fact all the rest of the deists—accept immortality in an orthodox fashion.

Though he is more skeptical of the potentialities of reason than most of the deists, Bolingbroke believes that reason is a faculty of divine origin which rightly used can reveal to all men the law of their nature, or natural religion. This law and religion he considers normative for all laws and religions. Bolingbroke accepts four of the five common notions of natural religion formulated first by Herbert—that God exists, that He must be worshipped, that morality is the most important part of religion, and that vices and crimes must be repented. He denies the fifth notion, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. He emphasizes most the importance of morality to religion.

Although the deists characteristically emphasize the importance of ethics, none of them but Bolingbroke de-

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velops with any thoroughness, an ethical theory. His own theory Bolingbroke considers a mean between the ethics of Hobbes and the Platonists. Except in his *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles*, he postulates two fundamental ethical principles—self-love and reason. Ideally, self-love instigates action and then reason, a slower principle, takes control, guiding self-love to social. Practically, reason being so sluggish and corrupted, self-love sometimes gets out of hand, and benevolence does not result. If the moral process functioned perfectly, man would be completely happy; since it does not, he can expect at best mixed happiness.

The negative aspects of deism Bolingbroke derives from his conception of God as a being external to the world and from his conception of the uniformity of reason. Inasmuch as God governs the world merely by general laws, it was necessary for Him to equip all men with a faculty which could provide them with all essential knowledge. This faculty we call reason. When divines and philosophers proudly seek inessential knowledge, they misuse reason, and it gives them instead of knowledge the confused intricacies of metaphysics and artificial theology.

One of the chief concerns of divines is to establish the authenticity of revelation. Bolingbroke agrees with the deists that this is a difficult, if not impossible, thing to do. No revelation, he says, is universally known to mankind. The Mosaic revelation, was known only to one race, the Christian revelation only to one group of men, albeit a large one, and only for the last seventeen hundred years. Since revelation is not on the face of it universal, it can be considered valid only if reason approves it. If it is entirely rational, it must be universal. But, Bolingbroke agrees with Tindal, there is

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much in revelation which is contrary to reason and much more that claims to be above reason. The implication is that revelation must be rejected. At times, however, Bolingbroke stresses the value of the Christian revelation as an approximation of natural religion.

One of the chief flaws in Bolingbroke's philosophical speculations is the inconsistency between his frequent and vehement condemnation of the *a priori* method of reasoning and his own repeated use of it. He attempts to establish God's existence and attributes *a posteriori*, but then proceeds to derive his theories of Providence, miracles, and optimism *a priori* from God's infinite power and wisdom. He tries to discover the law of nature *a posteriori* from God's works, but soon is obliged to reason *a priori* from the general precepts of the law of nature to specific interpretations of those precepts.

Bolingbroke is similarly inconsistent in his condemnation and use of analogical reasoning. He denies King's theory of the attributes because King reasons analogically, but he himself uses that very method not infrequently. He uses the clock analogy, for example, in proving the existence of God; and he delights in reducing his opponents' theories to absurdity by a figurative or analogical statement of their ideas.

Bolingbroke's philosophy, moreover, is not free from contradictions. He accepts in one context what he denies in another. Perhaps the most obvious contradiction is to be found in his ethical theory. We remember, he speaks of benevolence as the fundamental law and instinct of man's nature, and then denies the existence of all innate principles except self-love. Another notable contradiction is to be seen in his acceptance of pristine

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Christianity as an approximation of the law of nature and his virtual denial of all revelation.

Perhaps we should not too severely censure Bolingbroke for these inconsistencies and contradictions in light of his avowed intentions in writing his philosophical essays. He admits that his speculations are fragmentary and unsystematic, that,

they are all nothing more than repetitions of conversations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confusedly.¹

If we judge Bolingbroke's philosophical works on the basis of his intention in writing them, we shall not condemn him as an inconsistent and unsystematic philosopher; but rather we shall be interested in studying him as a figure exceptionally representative of late deism, for he discusses all the theories important to deism of his day. We shall be the more interested in him because he is perhaps the most comprehensive of all the deists. More often than any of the others he branches out from the characteristic deistic doctrines to speculate on problems of more general philosophical interest. He is not content, for example, to accept the conventional deistic definition of Providence; he realizes how that definition is inconsistent with many of the deistic tenets, and he develops, consequently, a consistent theory of Providence. He realizes that the doctrine of immortality, accepted by so many deists, cannot be universally demonstrated and, therefore, must be denied. He thinks that ethics, being the most important part of religion, deserves to be considered in more detail than it was by the deists.

In short, Bolingbroke's philosophical *Works* should not be dismissed in supercilious manner as they are by

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Warburton and Stephen. The former speaks of his famous essays as "little other than a Magazine or Warehouse of other men's lumber."² The latter calls them "this shifting quagmire of speculation, where the one genuine ingredient seems to be an indiscriminate hatred of all philosophers and divines."³ Bolingbroke was not a mere plagiary who could do nothing but rail against philosophers and divines. He railed no more than Woolston and Annet and far less than Warburton. He was as original as most of the deists and the most comprehensive of them all.

¹ Bolingbroke, V, 2.

² Warburton, *View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy*, p. 67.

³ Stephen, *op. cit.*, I, 177-8.

Appendix
Some Notes on Bolingbroke's Reading
in Philosophy

BOLINGBROKE read widely in both ancient and modern philosophy. I want in this appendix to indicate some of the books he read. I shall begin with Greek philosophy and proceed in chronological order, showing first the primary and then the secondary sources that he read.

Bolingbroke read at least part of the Latin translation of Plato by Marsilio Ficino, for he frequently quotes Plato in Latin which checks with that translation.¹ He also read Dacier's translation of the *Phaedo*, to which he refers specifically.²

The secondary sources of Bolingbroke's knowledge of Plato are much more complicated. He undoubtedly read the critical commentaries by Dacier which accompany the translation referred to above. Of those he refers specifically to "Argument du Phadeon"³ and "La Doctrine de Platon."⁴ He may have first found Ficino's translation recommended to him in another of these commentaries, "Les Interprètes et Commentateurs de Platon," where Dacier says that of the two available Latin translations of Plato Ficino's "me paroît pourtant la meilleure pour la lettre; & il est certain, qu'il y a moins de fautes."⁵ Bacon, Clarke, and Stanley are the other most important sources of Bolingbroke's knowledge of Plato. The first two I shall consider later. Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy* he read for some of his information about Plato and Socrates. On

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the page following a direct reference to that work he writes as follows:

Diogenes Laertius says, that Plato ascribed to him [Socrates] many things, which he never taught. This writer quotes for it [this assertion] even the authority of Socrates himself; for he relates, that when this philosopher heard the *Lysis* read, he cried out "Oh Hercules! how many things does this young man feign of me?"⁶

Stanley is Bolingbroke's informant here rather than Diogenes Laertius, as the following passage from the *History of Philosophy* shows:

Socrates hearing him recite the *Lysis*, cried out, Oh! *Hercules*, how many Things doth this young man feign of me? For not a few Things (adds Laertius) of those which he writ, *Socrates* never spoke.⁸

That Bolingbroke did not refer to Diogenes himself is evident when we look at the following from the English translation of his work which was available to Bolingbroke:

'Tis said, that *Socrates*, when he heard *Plato's Lysis* repeated by the Author himself, should cry out, *Heaven bless me, what a company of Fables has the young Man invented about me!* For he had written several things that *Socrates* never spoke.⁸

Bolingbroke did, however, go to Diogenes for general information about Platonism and Greek philosophy.⁹ He also used Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*,¹⁰ and *De placitis philosophorum*,¹¹ and Cicero's *De natura deorum*¹² for much the same purpose. Bolingbroke certainly read Rapin's *La comparaison de Platon et Aristote*,¹³

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which may be the source of much of his knowledge of the tradition of Plato and Aristotle.

Of Aristotle's works Bolingbroke read at least the *Metaphysics*, the *De anima*, and the *De historia animalium* in du Val's Latin translation, for he quotes from them all. In a number of instances he translates du Val's Latin into English, retaining some of the Latin phrases. For example, compare the two following passages, the first from Bolingbroke, the second from du Val:

He who taught that mind or intellect was the efficient cause of the world and of all order in it, appeared like a man of good sense, 'quasi sobrius,' in comparison with the former naturalists who were a set of vain babblers, 'vana dicentes' says Aristotle: and he adds, we know that this man was Anaxagoras.¹⁴

Quare qui ut animalibus, ita in natura intellectum inesse causam mundi, totiusque ordinis dixerat, quasi sobrius, coparatus ad antiquiores vana dicentes, apparuit. Istas autem rationes qui polam attigit Anaxagoram fuisse scimus.¹⁵

Bolingbroke also quotes accurately du Val's Latin.¹⁶

The most important secondary sources of Bolingbroke's knowledge of Aristotle besides Rapin, mentioned above, are Bacon and Cudworth, whom I shall discuss in their own right later.

In addition to Plato and Aristotle Bolingbroke mentions a great many philosophers, about whom he probably read in the secondary sources I have mentioned. He has a speaking acquaintance also with many of the neo-Platonists, but I have found no evidence that he has any first-hand knowledge of any of them.

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Of the Roman philosophers Bolingbroke read Cicero, Lucretius and Seneca. He seems to have been especially impressed by Cicero's *De natura deorum*, which he refers to and quotes many times.¹⁷ He read also *De divinatione*,¹⁸ the *Academica*,¹⁹ the *Tusculanae*,²⁰ *De finibus*,²¹ *De officiis*,²² *De senectute*,²³ *De legibus*,²⁴ the second *Brutus*,²⁵ and the orations, *Catilina*,²⁶ and *Cluentio*.²⁷ He read Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, which he quotes twice.²⁸ Of Seneca's works he read *De beneficiis*,²⁹ *De providentia*,³⁰ *Naturales quaestiones*,³¹ and several of the *Epistulae*, at least the 58th,³² the 88th,³³ and the 107th.³⁷

I shall discuss Bolingbroke's reading in modern philosophy in three general headings—continental philosophy,³⁵ English philosophy, and theology and deism.

Of the four philosophers Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Leibniz, I am certain Bolingbroke knew at first hand only the least important, Malebranche. He does, however, discuss Descartes in some detail, for he had read Daniel, *Voyage du monde de Descartes* with much interest. To see that Bolingbroke had read this book compare the following passage from it with Bolingbroke's English translation³⁶ of it:

Que les essences des choses, & les véritez, qu'on appelle nécessaires, ne sont point indépendantes de Dieu, & qu'elles ne sont immutables & éternelles, que parce que Dieu l'au voulu. . . Dieu est l'auteur de l'essence aussi bien que de l'existence des créatures.³⁷

"That the essences of things and the truths called necessary, are dependent on God, and that they are immutable and eternal in no other sense than this, that God willed they should be so. . ." "God is the author of the

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essence as well as the existence of his creatures."³⁸

Bolingbroke is indebted to Daniel not only for most, if not all, of his knowledge of Descartes' philosophy but also for his criticism of that philosophy. In effect, he repeats Daniel's criticism of Descartes' famous first principle, *cogito, ergo sum*;³⁹ he objects for the same reason that Daniel does to Descartes' assertion that the essence of the soul is thought;⁴⁰ he reiterates Daniel's dissatisfaction with Descartes' description of animals as mere automats;⁴¹ and he appropriates Daniel's criticism of occasionalism.⁴²

In contrast to his apparent ignorance of the text of Descartes is Bolingbroke's knowledge of the text of Malebranche, whose *De la recherche de la vérité* he quotes in French five times,⁴³ twice giving an accurate citation to the text.⁴⁴ Five more times he translates Malebranche's words into English, each time giving a precise citation in a footnote.⁴⁵ And on three occasions he refers to specific sections of Malebranche's works.⁴⁶

I know of only two secondary sources for Bolingbroke's knowledge about Malebranche, neither of which is an important one—Daniel's *Voyage*, where the Malebranche-Arnauld controversy is discussed⁴⁷ and Bayle's *Dictionnaire*. Bolingbroke's familiarity with the latter can be seen in the following:

Bayle . . . observes, that the notion of seeing all things in the infinite Being, which father Malebranche advanced on this assumption, that our ideas must be in God . . . differs little from the doctrine of Democritus,* who taught, that the images of objects, which present themselves to our senses, are emanations

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of God, nay that they are God and that the idea in our minds is God likewise.⁴⁸

The asterisk refers to a footnote which gives a quotation from the first book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*; all of the above passage and the footnote come from Bayle.⁴⁹

Not only had Bolingbroke not read Spinoza but he also shows no evidence of having read any detailed account of his doctrines. He merely reflects the pejorative attitude of his age, condemning him as a hopeless atheist.⁵⁰

Likewise Bolingbroke shows no real knowledge of Leibniz, though he does quote a few words from a reply of Leibniz's to Bayle's attack on his pre-established harmony.⁵¹ He gives no specific indication of what secondary account of Leibniz's philosophy he may have read, but I think it likely that he perused Bayle's article on him in the *Dictionnaire*. He may also have read some of the correspondence between Clarke and Leibniz, for we know that he read Clarke thoroughly.

Bolingbroke appears to have read with considerable interest "the oracles of law," as he calls them, Grotius and Pufendorf and Selden whom he associates with them. He certainly read carefully Grotius' *De jure belli et pacis* (1625).⁵² He may have read his *De veritate religionis Christianiae* (1627), though he only mentions it in connection with Clarke's reference to it.⁵³ He also read Pufendorf's *De jure naturae et gentium* (1672), though apparently in translation because he refers only to the English title.⁵⁴ He mentions and quotes Selden's *De jure naturali et gentium juxta disciplinam Ebraeorum*, (1640),⁵⁵ as he does the *Uxor Ebraica* (1647).⁵⁶

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Bolingbroke has much more detailed knowledge of English than of continental philosophy. Bacon, Bolingbroke read with great interest and thoroughness. He used the Latin edition of his works which was printed in London in 1730. I am certain of this because his name is listed among the subscribers to that edition, because his Latin quotations of Bacon check accurately with that edition, and because whenever he quotes Bacon in English the quotations are his own—that is, they do not collate with the English translation to which he had access. Bolingbroke quotes in Latin from “*De interpretatione naturae*,”⁵⁷ “*Parmenidis, Telesii et Democriti Philosophia*,”⁵⁸ “*Novum organum*,”⁵⁹ and “*De sapientia*.”⁶⁰

Bolingbroke admired Bacon’s point of view so much that he not infrequently appropriated his ideas, sometimes without giving Bacon due credit. In the following passage, for example, though he gives Bacon the credit of agreeing with him, he does not indicate how close he is to his source.

Upon the whole, it may very well be, that Democritus and others, whether atheists, or theists, who gave or seemed to give no place to God, nor intelligence in the production of the phenomena, nor made any mention by consequence of final causes, but applied themselves wholly to the discovery of material efficient causes, might penetrate, for that very reason, deeper into natural philosophy than they could have done, if they had resorted often to the wisdom and power of God, like Plato, to those of nature like Aristotle, and to final causes like both. This might be, and my lord Bacon who thinks so, and who

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approved this method of pursuing the study of physics, prepared, therefore, an apology for Des Cartes, long before this philosopher wanted it.⁶¹

Here is the source in Bacon's *De augmentis scientiarum*:

Quapropter philosophia naturalis Democritis, & aliorum, qui Deum & mentem a fabrica rerum amoverunt; & structuram infinitis naturae praelusionibus & testamentis (quas uno nomine fatum aut fortunam vocabant) attribuerunt; & rerum particularium causas materiae necessitati, sine intermixtione causarum finalium assignaurunt; nobis videtur, (quantum ex fragmentis reliquiis philosophiae eorum conjicere licet,) quatenus ad causas physicas multo solidior fuisse, & altius in naturam penetrasse; quam illa Aristotelis Platonis: hanc unicam ob causam, quod illi in causis finalibus numquam operam triverunt; hi autem eas perpetuo inculcarunt. Atque magis in hac parte accusandus Aristoteles quam Plato: quandoquidem fontem causarum finalium, Deum scilicet, omiserit, & naturam pro Deo substituerit, causasque ipsas finales, potius ut logicae amator quam theologiae, amplexus sit.⁶²

I doubt if Bolingbroke knew how closely he was quoting Bacon in the above passage. Spence reports Pope as saying that Bolingbroke had an extraordinary memory:

He has so great a memory as well as judgment, that if he is alone and without books, he can set down by himself, and refer to the

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books, or such a particular subject in them, in his own mind; and write as fully on it, as another man would with all his books about him.⁶³

Probably the volume of Bacon was not at hand when he wrote the passage referred to, and he simply remembered his source more accurately than he realized.

Bolingbroke seems to have read Hobbes almost as carefully as he did Bacon, though he frequently speaks of him with the condemnation characteristic of his times. He read Hobbes' two most important works, *The Leviathan* and *De cive*, and he quotes from them accurately even when you might expect him to be using a secondary source. Look at the following passage, for example:

Hobbes is accused of reasoning on this principle [that things known must be anterior to knowledge] in his *Leviathan*, and his book *de Cive*, by the author of the *Intellectual System of the Universe*, and his argument in the place where he mentions the notions that reason dictates to us concerning the divine attributes, is thus stated . . . "Since knowledge and intelligence are nothing more in us than a tumult of the mind, excited by the pressure of external objects on our organs, we must not imagine there is any such thing in God, these being things which depend on natural causes . . ." He adds, "in like manner when we attribute sight, and other sensations, or knowledge, and intelligence to God, which are in us nothing more than a certain tumult of the mind, excited by the pressure of external

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objects on our organs, we must not imagine that any thing like this happens to God."⁶⁴

It would seem that Bolingbroke got all his information from Cudworth, and that perhaps that philosopher quoted from Hobbes. But, though the fifth chapter of *The True Intellectual System* . . . does contain the substance of Hobbes' statement, the exact quotations given by Bolingbroke are not to be found. Actually, Bolingbroke is quoting directly from *The Leviathan* and *De cive*, as a comparison of his passage with the following shows:

The Leviathan:

Likewise when we attribute to him *sight* and other acts of sense; as also knowledge, and understanding; which in us is nothing else, but a tumult of the mind, raised by external things that press the organical parts of man's body: for there is no such thing in God; and being things that depend on natural causes, cannot be attributed to him.⁶⁷

De cive:

In like manner when we attribute *sight* and other acts of sense to him, or knowledge, or understanding, which in us are nothing else but a tumult of the mind, raised from outward objects pressing the organs; we must not think that any such thing befalls the Deity.⁶⁸

Bolingbroke also quotes from *De cive* from memory; for he refers to

that place of his book "de cive" where he speaks to this effect, for I quote here upon my memory, "that men were obliged to enter into compacts to preserve one another, and to

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seek peace wherever it could be had, in order to prevent the mischief and desolation which would attend his imaginary state of nature."⁶⁹

This quotation is not so close as his previous quotation by memory from Bacon, though the only word which does real violence to Hobbes' meaning is *imaginary*; Hobbes certainly does not describe the state of nature as imaginary.

Cudworth is apparently the only one of the Cambridge Platonists Bolingbroke read; he read both of his important treatises, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* and the *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*. The latter he says specifically that he read: "I have read again Dr. Cudworth's posthumous treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality."⁷⁰ Twice Bolingbroke quotes from this book, but with much less accuracy than he quoted from Bacon and Hobbes. His quotation is less accurate, I believe, because he disapproves of Cudworth's position and wants to make it look as ridiculous as possible. For example, he puts most of a page in quotation marks:

"Since we cannot conceive that there was ever a time when it was not yet actually true that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that equals added to equals produce equals, and the like in other instances; these intelligible natures, these necessary verities, had a being before the material world and all particular intellects had any." Again: "Since these natures, these verities, are according to Plato, nothing but noemata, objective notions or knowledges, that is, in good English, objects of thought, they could not exist without some mind in which

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they are comprehended. There is therefore an eternal mind which comprehended them always, or rather a mind which is itself these natures, these verities, these abstract ideas." Thus again, and to reason quite round a circle. "Since there is an eternal mind, that being must always comprehend himself, the extent of his own power, the ideas of all possible things. Now these natures, these verities, are included in these ideas. Our abstract ideas and universal notions are therefore eternal and self-existent like God himself. If there were none such there would be no God. But there are such because there is a God, on whom however they are independent. They cannot be modifications of matter, they must be therefore modifications of mind. Every thing that is imperfect must needs depend on something that is perfect in the same kind. There is therefore a cognation, or connection, between our created minds and the increated mind. Our imperfect intellect must therefore be a derivative participation of the perfect intellect." This rhapsody of jargon is faithfully extracted, and, for the most part, in Cudworth's own words.⁷¹

A careful examination of the pages of Cudworth's work shows us what Bolingbroke means by "faithfully extracted" and "for the most part, in Cudworth's own words." By the former, he means extracted faithfully according to his purpose of making Cudworth seem as ridiculous as possible. By the latter, he means in Cudworth's words unless it serves his purpose to use his own words. The first sentence above (except for the phrase,

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“equals added to equals produce equals” which comes from section 7, where Cudworth gives it in Latin) is taken from the sixth section⁷² of Chapter iv, Book IV, of the *Treatise*,⁷³ and many of the words are Cudworth’s own; but Bolingbroke changes the order and changes the subject from impersonal third person singular to first person plural. The next two sentences come from the following section of the *Treatise*.⁷⁴ This time there is more distortion. Bolingbroke changes many of the words and adds words of his own⁷⁵ without indicating this by punctuation. Most of the sentence next quoted comes from section 9,⁷⁶ though Bolingbroke takes what Cudworth used parenthetically for the main sentence. The next three sentences are, I believe, Bolingbroke’s own composition, or what he thinks to be Cudworth’s meaning. The next sentence comes from the first paragraph of the same section 5 and is accurately transcribed except for a few omissions. The following sentence comes from section 11.⁷⁷ The next one is taken from section 14.⁷⁸ And the last sentence, though not verbally Cudworth’s, does not misinterpret his meaning.

Thus, Bolingbroke’s method of quoting Cudworth is not only unsystematic but also unfair. He changes the order of Cudworth’s premises; he condenses him unduly; and he uses his own words as if they were Cudworth’s. He is really interpreting Cudworth when he would have the reader believe he is quoting him.

Bolingbroke specifically mentions the *True Intellectual System* . . . twice,⁷⁹ and nine other passages⁸⁰ give evidence of his having read it. In none of these nine does Bolingbroke indicate from what part of the three-volume treatise, or even from what treatise—that is, whether *Intellectual System* or *Immutable Morality*—he is drawing.

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Locke is one of the philosophers Bolingbroke read most thoroughly. He quotes from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* seventeen times,⁸¹ nine times giving direct references to the text.⁸² He quotes from *The Reasonableness of Christianity* three times.⁸³ He also quotes from *Civil Government* giving direct citations to the text.⁸⁴ He even quotes from *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle of St. Paul*.⁸⁵ In general these quotations are accurate. There seems in Bolingbroke to be a correlation between the accuracy of his quotations and the respect in which he holds the author he is quoting.

The only secondary source I know Bolingbroke used for knowledge of Locke is the prefatory material in Coste's translation of *The Reasonableness of Christianity*.⁸⁶

Newton, the man who shares with Locke the title of "most famous Englishmen of the day," apparently Bolingbroke knew only from secondary accounts. Like all non-mathematicians of his day, he did not read any of Newton's scientific works. He discusses his theory of gravitation in about as general terms as most of us today would discuss Einstein's theory of general relativity. He does, however, quote Newton once in Latin,⁸⁷ but this quotation is merely an avowal of ignorance on Newton's part, which he may have found quoted in some secondary source, or possibly in one of Newton's non-technical essays. Bolingbroke may, however, have read Newton's *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, for he suggests that Newton resembles Locke in losing "himself in the vague probabilities of chonology."⁸⁸

Several secondary accounts of Newton were available to Bolingbroke — Fontenelle's *Eulogium of Sir Isaac Newton* (1728), John Clarke's *Demonstrations of some*

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of *Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* (1730), and Voltaire's *Elements de la philosophie de Newton* (1738). Only the first am I certain that he read.⁸⁹

Berkeley, whom he dearly loved as a man,⁹⁰ Bolingbroke did not take very seriously as a philosopher. I think he probably read the *Alciphron*, which is an attack on the deistic position and would certainly have interested Bolingbroke, though I cannot prove it. The rest of Berkeley's works I have no reason to think he read. He may have neglected them, because he knew from various conversations that Berkeley was what he would call a Platonist, and he did not want to hurt one he was so fond of by criticizing his philosophy.

Shaftesbury's influence on Bolingbroke I have already discussed.⁹¹ Let me repeat that I cannot prove that Bolingbroke read the *Characteristics*, because he makes no direct reference to it and because in no place does Bolingbroke state a theory which proves his indebtedness. He could have read about both the doctrine of moral sense and of benevolence in Hutcheson as well as in Shaftesbury. I think it likely, however, that he did read the *Characteristics* simply because it was so widely read and discussed in his time.

I don't know whether Bolingbroke read any of Hutcheson's works or not. He does not refer to him and his works any more than he does to Shaftesbury and his. He does, of course, refer to the doctrine of moral sense, and he speaks of that doctrine in conjunction with the beauty of virtue,⁹² an association which might mean that he knew of or had read Hutcheson's *An Inquiry into the Original of our Idea of Beauty and Virtue*. Certainly, it is far from a positive reference to that book because Shaftesbury also speaks of the beauty of virtue.

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Bolingbroke shows that he had read Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* . . . by quoting from it, apparently from memory, for he does not put Butler's words in quotation marks.⁹³ There is, however, only this one reference to the *Analogy*, and he never speaks of Butler by name. The book seems not to have made much impression on him.

In determining Bolingbroke's readings in theology and deism, we are immediately confronted with this situation: Bolingbroke shows ample evidence of having read the works of a number of divines, most of whom he disagrees with violently; and he shows almost no direct evidence of having read the works of the deists, with whom, in general he would be in agreement. Perhaps the most obvious explanation would be that he prefers to attack rather than to praise. Undoubtedly, there is some truth in such an explanation. Or it may be that he did not want to be associated with the notorious deists. He is loath, we remember, to be associated with Hobbes, and, therefore, he attacks him, even though his own ethical theory at times resembles Hobbes'. But the deists he cannot brush off with an attack, because his theories too obviously resemble theirs. Moreover, every one he praises is acceptable. Bacon, Locke, and King are all people it is safe to be associated with. Perhaps, therefore, Bolingbroke's lack of courage more than any other factor accounts for his reluctance to express his debt to the deists.

Among the modern English theologians,⁹⁴ or divines as Bolingbroke calls them, Bolingbroke has read with more or less thoroughness the following: Wilkins, Manton, Barrow, Tillotson, King, Leslie, Abbadie, Whiston, Warburton, Clarke, Wollaston, and Conybeare.

He read Bishop Wilkins' *On the Principles and Duties*

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of *Natural Religion* which he quotes once⁹⁵ and refers to another time.⁹⁶ He was condemned as a boy to read some of Thomas Manton's one hundred and ninety sermons on the CXIX Psalm.⁹⁷ And he read some of Isaac Barrow's sermons.⁹⁸

Tillotson was a more important influence on Bolingbroke, for his "Sermon I" (Job, xxviii, 28)⁹⁹ inspired, or rather irritated, him to write "Letter Occasioned by One of Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons."¹⁰⁰ He refers twice to his "Sermon XXVI. A Discourse against Transubstantiation," this time with approval.¹⁰¹ He also makes two references to "Sermon CXLIV. The goodness of God."¹⁰² In every instance he seems to be relying on his memory, because he never refers to a sermon by title or number, merely saying, in effect, "Tillotson says in one of his sermons. . ."

I have mentioned Bolingbroke's reading of King in Chapter IV. Let me repeat that Bolingbroke read the *De origine mali* carefully. He also read the two sermons which are appended to the English translation of that work—"Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge, consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will,"¹⁰³ and "A Sermon on the Fall of man."¹⁰⁴

Bolingbroke read Charles Leslie's *The Case Stated between the Church of Rome and the Church of England* (1713).¹⁰⁵ One would expect him also to have read his *A Short and Easy Method with the Deists* (1709), though there is no direct evidence that he did. He also read James Abbadie's *La vérité de la religion Crétienne* (1717),¹⁰⁶ and, probably William Whiston's *Primitive Christianity* (1711).¹⁰⁷ He certainly read William Warburton's *The Alliance between Church and State* (1736);¹⁰⁸ and it is very likely that he read *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1738-41).¹⁰⁹

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Bolingbroke shows by an abundance of evidence that he has recently and thoroughly read both Clarke's most important treatises, the Boyle Lectures, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* and *A Discourse concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (Bolingbroke calls the latter by its short title, *The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*). Bolingbroke himself refers to Clarke as "the doctor, whom I cite so often, because his book [Evidence . . .] is the last I have read on this subject."¹¹⁰ The fact is he cites that book twenty-seven times, each time giving references to particular pages,¹¹¹ only one of which is wrong.¹¹² The *Demonstration* he refers to only three times.¹¹³ Some of these direct references follow quotations of Clarke—occasionally the quotation marks are omitted; others merely refer to the text of Clarke. Besides referring directly to the text of Clarke, Bolingbroke frequently quotes him—again sometimes without quotation marks—without identifying the source.¹¹⁴

Bolingbroke certainly read William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1722), for he refers to specific pages of that treatise eight times.¹¹⁵ Moreover, he quotes Wollaston without identifying the quotation.¹¹⁶ He also telescopes together several quotations from him the way we have seen him do with Cudworth.

I know of only one other divine whose work Bolingbroke has definitely read. Once in a footnote he refers to a specific page of John Conybeare's *A Defense of Revealed Religion* (1732).¹¹⁸

The "physico-theologists," Bolingbroke undoubtedly read. Though he does not mention the books by name, I am practically certain he read John Ray's *The Wis-*

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dom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation (1691), William Derham's *Physico-Theology: or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation* (1713), and Bernard Nieuwen-tyt's *The Religious Philosopher: or the Right Use of Contemplating the Works of the Creator* (1730).¹¹⁹

Bolingbroke mentions only two of the deists by name—Collins and Tindal. He speaks of Collins in conjunction with his discussion of the league between atheists and divines as a typical atheist.¹²⁰ Since the doctrine concerning which he thinks atheists and divines are in league is the immortality of the soul, he may here be referring to Collins' *Letter to Mr. Dodwell*. Bolingbroke may have found the criticism he makes of King's analogical reasoning in Collins' *Vindication of the Divine Attributes*.¹²¹ In the letter introductory to "Essay the First" Bolingbroke discusses free-thinking, coming to the rather conservative conclusion:

Let us seek truth, but seek it quietly as well as freely. Let us not imagine, like some who are called free-thinkers, that every man, who can think and judge for himself, as he has a right to do, has therefore a right of speaking, any more than of acting according to the full freedom of his thoughts.¹²²

Bolingbroke may be reacting here to Collins' *A Discourse of Free-Thinking*. I think it would be safe to say that it is likely that Bolingbroke read those of Collins' works I have mentioned.

Tindal, Bolingbroke refers to by name only once. In a footnote early in "Fragment LXXIV" he defends Tindal in a rather devious way.¹²³ In another footnote, this one to "Essay the Fourth," he refers to "a very great and worthy man" who wrote a book "to shew that

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christianity is indeed very near as old as the creation."¹²⁴ He must be thinking of Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation*. Moreover, Bolingbroke's deistic theories in several instances—notably his theory of the law of nature and of revelation—so closely resemble Tindal's that I am practically certain he read Tindal's book.

Although Bolingbroke never refers to Annet or his works, I think he may have read *Judging for Ourselves* and *The History and Character of St. Paul*—because in several instances his theories resemble Annet's. He and Annet deny particular providences—and they are the only deists who do so in a positive manner. They both recognize the possible fallibility of reason, though Annet emphasizes the perfection of reason more than Bolingbroke does. They both attack St. Paul and the Church Fathers. And, finally, they both offer a radical criticism of revelation.

I have only one little hint that Bolingbroke may have read some of Toland. In "Fragment LXIX" he says that the doctrine of immortality is said to have been "brought into Greece first by Pherecydes of Syros."¹²⁵ He may have got this information from Toland's *Letters to Serena*.¹²⁶ Indeed, his sketch of the historical background of the doctrine of immortality seems to follow Toland's "Letter II."¹²⁷

I have no reason to think Bolingbroke read the works of any of the other deists, though he may very probably have done so.

¹ Cf. Bolingbroke, III, 520, with Plato, *Opera Omnia* Marsilio Ficino, trans. (Frankfort, 1602), p. 1053. I think this is the edition used by Bolingbroke rather than earlier ones, because its orthography corresponds to Bolingbroke's more accurately than theirs does.

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- ² Cf. Bolingbroke, IV, 115, with Andre Dacier, "Les Oeuvres de Platon," *Bibliothèque des Anciens Philosophes*, II, 322.
- ³ See footnote above.
- ⁴ Cf. Bolingbroke, IV, III, with Dacier, *op. cit.*, III, 181-2.
- ⁵ Dacier, *op. cit.*, III, 230.
- ⁶ Bolingbroke, IV, 112.
- ⁷ Thomas Stanley, *History of Philosophy* (London, 1743) p. 164.
- ⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives . . . of . . . Ancient Philosophers* (London, 1696), p. 222.
- ⁹ Bolingbroke, IV, 63, 79, 103, 105; V, 165, 230, 245; I, 116, etc.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 79, 203.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 112.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, IV, 84, 175, 361; V, 43, 55, 105, 106.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, IV, 53, 473.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 106. Following this passage is a footnote, referring to "Aris. metaphy. li"; it should be *liii*.
- ¹⁵ Aristotle, *Omnia Opera*, William du Val, trans. (Paris, 1619) II, 843.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Bolingbroke, III, 241, with Aristotle, *op. cit.*, II, 837.
- ¹⁷ Bolingbroke, IV, 84, 101, 175, 361; V, 43, 55, 62, 106, 249, 385.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 55, 56; V, 255, 543.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 359; V, 249.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 559; IV, 9, 45, 179, 375; V, 223, 227, 254, 405.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, V, 252, 400.
- ²² *Ibid.*, V, 81, 103, 173.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, IV, 44.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 63, 310; 102.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 399.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 288.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 288; V, 354.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 557; V, 323-4.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 318, 327-8, 334.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 305, 317, 400, 406, 479.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, III, 389.
- ³² *Ibid.*, IV, 393.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, IV, 104.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 340.
- ³⁵ I am not including the French skeptics, Montaigne and Charron in this section because I have shown that Bolingbroke read the *Essais* and *La Sagesse* in Chapter VIII.
- ³⁶ Although Daniel's *Voyage* . . . was translated into English as early as 1694, I believe Bolingbroke used the French version because his quotations do not correspond accurately to the English translation; and Mersenne, the French form, is the one used by Bolingbroke instead of the Latinized Mersennes to be found in the English version. Moreover, Bolingbroke on one occasion (IV, 128) refers specifically to the French title.

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- 37 P. G. Daniel, *Voyage du monde de Descartes* (Paris, 1702), II, 219-20.
- 38 Bolingbroke, V, 9-10.
- 39 Cf. *ibid.*, III, 365 with Daniel, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-9.
- 40 Cf. for example, the two following: "Plusieurs personnes lui dit-il, vous ont fait cette objection. Que si l'essence de l'âme consistoit dans la pensée actuelle, l'âme ne pourroit jamais être sans pensée: & qu'ainsi il s'ensuivroit que nous aurions pensé même étant dans le ventre de notre mère . . ." (Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 203) with "When it was objected to Des Cartes that if thought was the essence of the soul, the soul of the child must think in the mother's womb . . ." (Bolingbroke, III, 367).
- 41 Cf. Bolingbroke, III, 539, with Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
- 42 Cf. *ibid.*, III, 541, with Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
- 43 Bolingbroke, III, 544, 505; IV, 152; V, 31, 32. It is curious that Bolingbroke should know Malebranche so much better than he does his more famous master. But, in the first place, Malebranche must have been read more in Bolingbroke's day than one would expect. His *Search After Truth* was published both at Oxford and at London in 1694; his *Treatise of Nature and Grace* was published in London the following year; and his *Treatise of Morality* appeared there in 1699. In 1704 R. Taylor published *The Two Covenants . . . Designed to Shew the Use and Advantage of Some of M. Malebranche's Principles*. In addition to these English editions eight French editions of Malebranche's works were published in Paris from 1674-1749. Secondly, Bolingbroke may have had a special introduction to Malebranche's writings from his [Bolingbroke's] friend Berkeley. Thirdly, his appetite may have been whetted by his avid disapproval of Malebranche's Platonic tendencies.
- 44 *Ibid.*, III, 505; V, 327.
- 45 *Ibid.*, III, 541 (3 on this page), 558; V, 327.
- 46 *Ibid.*, III, 382, 433, 543.
- 47 Daniel, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-7.
- 48 Bolingbroke, III, 470-1.
- 49 See Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Basle, 1738) II, 274.
- 50 Bolingbroke, V, 455.
- 51 *Ibid.*, III, 394.
- 52 *Ibid.*, IV, 285; V, 75-6, 83, 86, 93, 108, 150.
- 53 *Ibid.* V, 303.
- 54 *Ibid.*, V, 42, 119, 123, 162.
- 55 *Ibid.*, IV, 125; V, 69, 79, 142, 155ff., 179.
- 56 *Ibid.*, V, 160, 161, 171.
- 57 Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 129 with Bacon, *Opera Omnia* (London, 1730), II, 259. and *ibid.*, III, 532 with Bacon, *op. cit.*, II, 244. See also Bolingbroke, IV, 132.
- 58 Bolingbroke, IV, 130, 131.

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- 59 Cf. *ibid.*, with Bacon, *op. cit.*, I, 274; see also Bolingbroke, III, 324.
- 60 Cf. *ibid.*, with Bacon, *op. cit.*, II, 348.
- 61 Bolingbroke, III, 404.
- 62 Bacon, *op. cit.*, I, 110.
- 63 Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes . . .*, S. W. Singer, ed. (London, 1820) p. 223.
- 64 Bolingbroke, III, 351-2.
- 65 See Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe with a Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London, 1845), II, 556.
- 66 Bolingbroke quotes once more from *The Leviathan*, this time not mentioning the particular treatise from which he is drawing. Cf. Bolingbroke, IV, 545-6 with Hobbes, *English Works*, Sir Wm. Molesworth, ed. (London, 1839) III, 617ff.
- 67 Hobbes, *op. cit.*, III, 352.
- 68 *Ibid.*, II, 215-6. Although Bolingbroke always calls this treatise by its Latin title, I believe he read it in the English version, for his quotations from it collate with that text.
- 69 Bolingbroke, V, 59.
- 70 *Ibid.*, V, 3.
- 71 *Ibid.*, V, 30.
- 72 This section is wrongly labeled 5 in the copy I used.
- 73 Cudworth, *op. cit.*, III, 625.
- 74 *Ibid.*, III, 626.
- 75 The phrase, "that is, in good English, objects of thought," is entirely Bolingbroke's composition.
- 76 Cudworth, *op. cit.*, III, 627.
- 77 *Ibid.*, III, 628.
- 78 *Ibid.*, III, 630.
- 79 Bolingbroke, IV, 206, 210.
- 80 *Ibid.*, IV, 19, 75, 91, 92, 95, 100, 115; 199; V, 42.
- 81 *Ibid.*, III, 379-80, 441-2, 446, 447, 493-4, 495, 497, 508, 510, 511, 513; V, 12, 15, 18, 192, 358, 359.
- 82 *Ibid.*, III, 441-2, 446, 443-4, 495, 510, 513, 271; V, 12, 18.
- 83 *Ibid.*, IV, 192, 242, 296.
- 84 *Ibid.*, V, 125ff.
- 85 *Ibid.*, IV, 330, 509.
- 86 Pierre Coste translated this treatise into French in 1696.
- 87 Bolingbroke, III, 393.
- 88 *Ibid.*, IV, 191.
- 89 *Ibid.*, III, 545ff.
- 90 Bolingbroke speaks of Berkeley as "one I love and honor" (V, 34), and compares him with Socrates as a good man (IV, 367). The personal relations between Bolingbroke and Berkeley cannot be determined in any detail. We know that Bolingbroke knew of him as early as September 9, 1713, because on that day he wrote an official letter on behalf of Queen Anne granting one George Berkeley a two years' leave

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of absence from Trinity College (Alexander C. Fraser, ed., Berkeley's *Works*, Oxford, 1871, IV, 65). We also know that Bolingbroke had not actually met Berkeley by July 21, 1725, because in a letter of that date he writes to Swift: "Ford brought the Dean of Derry [Berkeley] to see me. Unfortunately for me, I was then out of town; and the journey of the former into Ireland will perhaps defer for some time my making acquaintance with the other, which I am sorry for" (Swift, *Correspondence*, III, 259). The two must have met during the next few months, for Berkeley is said to have been one of Bolingbroke's first visitors at Dawley.

⁹¹ See Chapter VII.

⁹² Bolingbroke, IV, 286.

⁹³ Cf. Bolingbroke, V, 490-1 with Butler, *Works* (Oxford, 1896), I, 84-6.

⁹⁴ Bolingbroke also read of the French clerics *Méthode d'étudier . . . la philosophie* (1681-93) by Louis de Thomassin and *Traité de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain* (1723) by Pierre David Huet (see Bolingbroke, IV, 21, 363, 373 and the introduction above).

⁹⁵ Bolingbroke, IV, 70-1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 565.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 345.

⁹⁸ See, especially, *ibid.*, IV, 278-9, 487-9, 403-4; V, 359, 566.

⁹⁹ Tillotson, *op. cit.*, I, lff.

¹⁰⁰ Bolingbroke, III, 257ff.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 596, 598, with Tillotson, *op. cit.*, II, 198ff.

¹⁰² Cf. Bolingbroke, IV, 507; V, 532, with Tillotson, *op. cit.*, VIII, 3537ff, see especially p. 3552.

¹⁰³ Bolingbroke, V, 519. This sermon is published separately as *Discourse on Predestination* (Oxford, 1821). Cf. pp. 48-9 of that volume with Bolingbroke V, 534; also cf. pp. 35-6 with Bolingbroke, V, 539-40.

¹⁰⁴ Bolingbroke, V, 540.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 569.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 276ff.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 31-2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 515-16, 604, 621-2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 470.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 234.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 221 (two on this page), 222, 226, 227, 235, 272 (two on this page), 280 (two on this page), 283 (three on this page), 285, 287, 290, 292 (four on this page, 362, 394, 418, 437, 442. See also 436 and 491 where Bolingbroke refers to the section of *Evidences* . . .

¹¹² *Ibid.*, V, 290 (268 is given by Bolingbroke instead of 264).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, V, 314, 356, 394; see also 436, where Bolingbroke refers to the section of the *Demonstration*.

¹¹⁴ Cf. the following: Bolingbroke V, 202ff., 207, 213, 215, 218,

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- 219, 220, 234, 295, 303, 310, 311, 433, with Clarke, *Evidences* . . . (London, 1719), pp. 188ff., 200, 203, 205, 192, 193, 172, 170, 26, 217, 275, 26, 132.
- ¹¹⁵ Bolingbroke, V, 345, 364 (two on this page), 372ff. (four on these pages), 389.
- ¹¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, V, 378 and III, 517 with Wollaston, *op. cit.*, pp. 200 and 197.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 372ff.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 531.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 259; V, 339.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 331.
- ¹²¹ See Chapter I.
- ¹²² Bolingbroke, III, 333-4.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, V, 523.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 373.
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- ¹²⁷ See Chapter V.

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